THE THIRD SEX

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THE THIRD SEX

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BY

ERNST VON WOLZOGEN

Author of "Florian Mayr," etc.

ENGLISH VERSION BY

GRACE ISABEL COLBRON

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PREFACE

Ernst von Wolzogen is quite able to speak for himself, even when bidding for the favor of an English-reading public. But at one time this most versatile artistic personality of modern Germany was manager of his famous Ueberbrettl, (which you may translate as Literary Variety Show if you feel so inclined) and he took it unto himself to announce each one of the artists by a little spoken preface which was usually as characteristic and as witty as is all his work. While not attempting in any way to compete with him in these two qualities I am taking the liberty of letting him see how it feels to be introduced by a preface himself.

Ernst von Wolzogen sets a hard task for the literary critic with a conscience. He is one of those writers whose exuberance of individuality, whose insistent personality so colors all his work that it is difficult to judge the work on its own merits alone. And in none of a long list of books from his pen is this quality so in evidence as in

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the volume we offer here, the *Third Sex*. His literary mannerism which after all seems but the natural expression of his personality, his satirical gift which serves so aptly as a vehicle for the utterance of the most serious thoughts, both run riot in this book. It reads like a daring bit of fun all through. And yet when the smile is broadest, the writer brings to expression some of the deepest truths that lie at the heart of that mental trend we call Feminism, now taking its place as one of the burning questions of the day. This last fact is all the more remarkable in that the book was written some years ago in Germany, a country where in this Year of Grace 1914 the new Feminism is but just raising its head to peep over its cradle bars. However, Ernst von Wolzogen is nothing if not unexpected.

While Feminism is the theme of the book—the false and hampering old ideals, the mistakes of the Revolt and its line of best endeavor—a few other subjects come in for a share of satirical attention. It is doubtful if any writer of any nation ever so completely burlesqued German University pedantry as it is done here in the "Meyer of Westphalia" episode. And just as in his Conferencièr days of the literary variety show, Ernst von Wol-

zogen leaves you to take your choice as to his own point of view in all these matters. But craving his pardon—we will now step aside and let him do his turn.

GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

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CHAPTER I

"PLEASE shut that book, Claire, and now listen. . . . We can't go on like this forever. I ask you in all seriousness: will you marry me?"

Thus spoke Dr. Josef Reithmeyer, licentiate of the University, living in Munich in the Blütenstrasse, rear building up one flight, to his beautiful friend Claire de Fries, born in Gröningen in Friesland, student of medicine in Zürich, and at that moment on a visit to the Blütenstrasse, rear building up one flight.

Half of Dr. Reithmeyer's not very large study was bathed in brightest sunshine, and gleaming dust particles mingled with the slowly twisting pale-blue cigarette smoke to queer fantastic figures in the broad band of light shot through the window by the low-hanging sun. The remainder of the cosy room lay in shadow. In this portion of it was the glass door leading

out onto the roof of a woodshed, over which Dr. Reithmeyer had put an awning, with sides that could be let down at will so that the sun might be entirely shut out. A breakfast table under the awning had not yet been cleared, and a group of sparrows fought noisily for the crumbs on cloth and floor. The twittering of the birds, the busy hammering from the cobbler-shop on the ground floor, and the merry cries of children playing in the neighboring courtyard, mingled with the distant street noises in a peaceful morning symphony.

Within the room all was still. The beautiful Miss de Fries closed her fat text-book of pathology, stretched herself at full length on the divan, and crossed her hands behind her blond curls. She gnawed her full lips with her strong white teeth, as if in deep thought, and stared silently up at the tiresome garlands on the painted ceiling.

Dr. Reithmeyer waited about five minutes. He stood leaning on the desk between the window and the glass door, smoked his cigarette, and admired his well-kept nails. At last his patience gave way. He tossed what was left of the papyros into the ash-tray, ran his slender white fingers through his shining black beard, and

remarked: "Well? The idea cannot be so very new to you. You must have given the matter an occasional thought yourself. We have been as good as married for two years now, better than married, I might almost say. So we can scarcely be called foolhardy if we legalize our relations."

"But Seppl dear, it's so much nicer this way," answered Miss de Fries, in the calmest possible tone, without moving from her comfortable position. "Besides, it's violating the compact. We are free agents."

"You may be," said Dr. Reithmeyer, coming a step or two nearer the divan, "you may be, but only for a little while longer. When you take up the professional practice of medicine you are no longer a free agent. And I am not free now. You see, my dear Claire, the matter stands thus: I may get the professorship any day. I spoke to Professor Brenninger only yesterday; there is a vacancy and I am to be suggested for it. But of course all that is impossible if I continue to — to live in open scandal."

Miss de Fries took her hands from behind her head, crossed them over the cover of the pathology, and laughed gently.

This angered Dr. Reithmeyer, and he ex-

claimed irritably: "You consider it a joke, apparently. My dear girl, devotion to principle is all very well. But it is foolish, or worse, when it interferes with the happiness of two people who love one another. If you are tired of me already, please say so honestly; but if not, why do you insist on ruining my career? It would hardly be kind of you if, after all we have been to each other, you were to — to jilt me."

"Hello!" exclaimed Miss de Fries, much amused. She rose quickly to a sitting posture and dropped her feet to the floor. "Come here, Seppl, and sit down beside me — let me look at you."

He sat down on the low divan at her side, and she laid both hands on his shoulders, smiling into his sober face. "Now this is really amusing," she continued, her rather large white hands moving gently over his hair and beard. "The world is indeed turned topsy-turvy. Formerly it was the maiden who implored her fickle lover not to throw her over, 'Give me back my honor! you have made me unhappy forever! cruel man!' and so forth. And now I find you using those very same terms. The New Man! Isn't that enough to make one laugh?"

Dr. Reithmeyer caught her hands and held

them fast, for the stroking made him nervous. "Don't be a goosey," he endeavored to joke. "The New Woman would naturally call forth the New Man, but there is no reason why he should be the fool you seem to expect. I think I might look for a little more good-will on your part. I am taking for granted that you entered into this affair with me because you loved me, and not merely to defy the family, or to make yourself talked about."

Her only answer was to draw him close and give him a hearty kiss.

"Well, then?" he continued, evidently satisfied on that point. "Now that we have settled down into what is a true marriage, in spite of long separations, in spite even of our widely differing temperaments and professions, I really don't see why *we* should not risk founding a family as well as any other respectable couple. The essentials are all there."

The beautiful Miss de Fries sighed drolly: "What a tease you are, my dear Seppl! Won't you leave me at least the time to make my state examinations, and then the six months of study in the Paris hospitals?"

"Indeed? And then, when I am settled here as professor, you snow in on me some fine day,

possibly with a baby old enough to say 'Bonjour, papa?'"

"Why not? Of course I should come whenever you want me, if I am otherwise free to come. And of course I should bring the baby, if there was one."

"Much obliged, but I should be forced to decline the honor."

"And why? I do not understand."

"Because a professor of the Royal University may possibly be permitted a secret love affair, but certainly not an openly acknowledged child of this affair."

"That is utter nonsense!"

"Of course it is utter nonsense. We two know that all so-called morality is built up on utter nonsense. But if by making some little concession to the public idea of morality we can secure a comfortable livelihood for ourselves, we would be utter idiots if we did not do it."

"All very well and good, I take no exception to the logic. But I have a feeling that we will be punished somehow if we backslide."

"I believe you are superstitious."

"Possibly. He who has strong convictions is most susceptible to superstition. Since I have ceased trembling at the thought of an atonement

in the hereafter, I take it for granted that all sin is punished in this existence. That satisfies my sense of justice. If it is not so, then there must be something like the Buddhistic transmigration of souls. The entire universe is built up with such logic that guilt without punishment would violate the law of causation — and I cannot imagine such a violation possible. I have too much respect for the splendid legalism of the Universal Order."

Dr. Reithmeyer cut a wry face. He let himself fall into an armchair with a comic sigh and sat rubbing his knees with the flat of his hands, as he answered: "I have an intense desire to upset the Universal Order by crawling up yonder wall. It's too absurd! Here you are proving to me, by philosophy and logic, that I must either renounce my academic career, or give up my right to your charming person. Keep your philosophy to yourself, and help me to win my honey wifie."

Miss de Fries stood full in the gleaming wave of light that surrounded her short blond curls like a delicate shining veil, falling low on her back — a bridal veil of sunshine! Her loose white cashmere morning gown left her throat open, and from the fine lines of neck and breast an artist could have deduced a perfect figure under the soft

folds. Her face, turned from the light, seemed almost brown by contrast, softly pink-tinted, and under heavy black brows and long lashes her great dark eyes shone soft and calm as the eyes of an antelope. Claire de Fries was a very beautiful young woman. Her hands were large and somewhat masculine, but well shaped and carefully tended. She blushed as she felt her lover's glance rest on her with admiration and desire. She was at his side in two long steps, seated herself on his knee, and laid her full round arms about his neck. She pressed her cheek caressingly to his, and spoke in a tone of motherly tenderness: "My darling Seppl, what an impossibly antiquated person you are! He wants a honey wifie, does he? You'll have to look elsewhere for that sort of thing, my dearest boy, it's not in my line."

"It is," he reiterated obstinately, holding her close and kissing her throat. "It's just your greatest charm, that in spite of all your cleverness, your zeal for science, and your truly commendable energy, you are still so entirely womanly. That is why I love you, and why I cannot live without you."

"Egoist!" she laughed. "This proposed marriage will either make me unhappy *now*, or

condemn me, in my next incarnation, to go through life as a watch-dog or a cab-horse, in punishment for my desertion of the cause of Reason. But that does not worry *you* in the least, my noble lord! You want to tie me down for my whole life just out of selfishness, because you don't want me to belong to anyone else, not even to myself."

"No, I don't," he cried, almost in anger. "What do you want of yourself, anyway? Don't you know that it is more blessed to give than to receive — haven't you felt the truth of that?"

"To be honest, I haven't," she replied, a little thoughtfully. "I may not be quite as womanly as, to my shame, you appear to imagine."

"You certainly don't put yourself in a class with the Haider girls, or Mesdames Grötzinger, Stummer, Wiesbeck, or the others of that ilk?"

"And why not?"

"Nonsense! They are not women at all; they belong to the third sex. They are neuters with the outer appearance of femininity, who, through much exertion, have gradually sloughed off womanly feelings and have won in their place a sort of deformed masculine soul."

"Indeed?" The beautiful Claire was

aroused. "Hear the proud masculine spirit assert itself! Let me tell you, my dear friend, that what you say is the greatest possible bosh, and unjust at that. If those women belong to the third sex, then I look upon it as an honor to be likewise classified."

She had risen and walked to the desk, where she played nervously with a paper-knife. Dr. Reithmeyer rose also, and exclaimed complainingly:

"But you *don't* belong to it; you couldn't ever belong to it."

"And why not? Aren't the women you mention splendid fellows?"

"Well, first because — hm! because — and secondly — well, thirdly, and finally, because you are much too beautiful!"

Miss de Fries was seriously angry now. "Oh, spare me such nonsense! Aren't there plenty of good-looking *men* in the world? And does every one think they have nothing better to do than to waste their time turning the heads of silly girls? I should really like to know why a good-looking woman must be condemned to devote herself solely and entirely to the pleasure of that noble creature Man? It's too stupid! Don't you suppose that any of the women you

speak of could, if she wished it, be just as good a wife and mother as I could be?"

Dr. Reithmeyer laughed ironically. "Oh, I dare say they want to all right, but they can't find the men to help them to it; that's the trouble."

Miss de Fries flung the paper-knife angrily on the desk, and with a muttered "Ridiculous!" walked to the divan, took up her book, and without another word strode proudly out of the nearest door.

"Oh, Claire, we mustn't quarrel! why, we never quarrel!" Her lover tried to call after her but the slamming of the door cut off his words. He paced the room for a few moments with his hands in his pockets, and an air of angry indecision. Then he caught up his hat and cane and left the apartment.

Just as Dr. Reithmeyer emerged from the main doorway onto the Blütenstrasse a lady sprang from her bicycle directly in front of him. She was of scarcely middle height and of stocky figure, with sturdy legs in black stockings and blue cloth knickerbockers, below a loose blouse with a sailor collar. A velvet visor cap sat jauntily on her short brown hair, with a tilt not unbecoming to the bright, boyish face and enter-

prising nose under it. This was Miss Hildegard Haider, of the firm Moritz Haider's Daughters, bankers, better known to her friends as "Box."

"Ah, good morning, Box," said Dr. Reithmeyer, raising his hat. "Were you on your way to see us?"

"Morning, Seppl," replied the stranger cheerily, giving him a hearty handshake, "I had a spare half-hour and thought I would see what you two were about! How goes the world with you?"

"Pretty badly, thank you. We have just been quarreling."

"Really?" said the girl in astonishment. "Oh, come along; I'll play peacemaker. Claire upstairs?"

"Yes, Claire is up there. Go up and let her tell you all about it, so that you can think out my punishment together. For, of course, I'll get the worst of it."

"It can't be anything serious," cried Miss Hildegard. "Why don't you punch each other's heads, and then make up?"

"You would recommend punching in such cases? That looks like you, Box."

"I should imagine an occasional punching to

be a rather agreeable variation of married life. I believe in the shortest process anyway. Are you coming up with me?"

"No, thanks, I must go for a walk to let off steam. Shall I carry your wheel upstairs?"

"It will do here just as well. By-by; wish you a happy sulking time."

"Much obliged; au revoir."

And each went his own way.

CHAPTER II

THE outer shutters were let down, the "young man" had gone home, and Miss Hildegard Haider, of the firm of Moritz Haider's Daughters, stood in her office and gave a last look around to see that every article was in its place and all the keys withdrawn, before she went out, locking and bolting the door behind her. Her yellow spaniel danced barking about her, glad that his daily trial of patience was over. During business hours he had to lie silent and motionless at her feet under the desk, but now he was to have his reward in the shape of a healthy run beside the wheel. Miss Haider appeared to be in equally good spirits. She whistled gayly and patted the dog's thick head. It had been an unusually lucky business day, and now she was looking forward to a pleasant evening with friends whom she had invited to supper. She had sent her sister Martha home from the office an hour ago, to make the necessary preparations. She jumped on her wheel —

not in knickerbockers this time, for she believed in dignity during business hours, and always wore long cloth or velvet skirts in her office — and rode through the Ludwigsstrasse to the Victory Gate. She would have preferred to ride directly home to the Giselastrasse, but Schampus, the dog, had to have his exercise, so she dutifully pedaled the usual run to the five-mile stone on the Schwabinger Highroad, and then hurried back. She ran two steps at a time up the four flights to her modest mansard apartment, and found the table already set for eight. Martha had done nobly, and the effect was very pretty, but Miss Hildegard did not seem quite satisfied with it. In spite of her eminent success in her efforts to make herself as masculine as possible, she was still proud of certain little feminine qualities, such as her orderliness, and her talent for arranging her rooms. She was proud also of her china, which had not been bought by the dozen in shops, but gathered piece by piece in auction rooms, until each cup and plate and platter had some special value as a work of art or a curiosity. Her handsome, heavy silver had been left her by her father.

This father, Moritz Haider, had been a queer sort of man. He was born a Jew, but had

changed his religion for love of his strictly Protestant wife, even giving up his own name, which rumor said was Cohn. He had been a good business man, but somewhat of a dreamer also; had pondered much on philosophic problems, and suffered from periodical attacks of an absurd passion for collecting. This passion cost him much money, and he would often sell a collection for a song, when a new line of objects attracted him. His latest fancy had been for tobacco-stoppers in the form of legs made of porcelain or precious metals, and his daughters kept the velvet box with the seventy-five female legs, long and short, fat and thin, naked, stockinged and booted, in pious memory of their father's harmless folly. The old man had left these seventy-five legs to his Hildegard with more anxious recommendation for their care than he had his business. The latter had fallen off sadly during the last years of his life, thanks to his one good-for-nothing son, whom he finally dispatched to the New World where the young man disappeared altogether.

The dying man had consented willingly that the firm should be known as Moritz Haider's Daughters, strange as it might sound. He knew what a splendid fellow Hildegard was,

and how well she understood the business. And he had always taken Hildegard's solemn declaration never to marry, in all seriousness. Neither he nor anyone else in the family could imagine Hildegard as a wife, so, according to his opinion, there was not the slightest danger that she might fall in love, and let the business slip into the hands of some windbag. But Martha, the "sweet flower," as they called her at home, pretty sentimental coquettish Martha would doubtless marry soon, and her future had been assured by making her a partner in the firm.

Hildegard had justified her father's confidence and brought the sadly endangered firm into good repute again, but the "sweet flower" had come to the age of twenty-four without having fulfilled *her* mission in life. She grew prettier every day, and at twenty-two was an acknowledged beauty, worshiped by all the artists in town. Martha Haider could count by the dozen the men who had been in love with her, and the last five years of her life had been passed in anxious expectation of a proposal of marriage which never came. Flatteries, passionate words, flowers, and poems — these were all her beauty had as yet brought her. The more forward men who thought her an easy prey

were soon turned down, and the shy ones did not dare venture a serious proposal, fearing the "bankeress" would then become too business-like. For these were nearly all young men without prospects. The continuous condition of defense and expectation which had been her fate for several years now, had made Martha Haider nervous, and begun to affect even her beauty. She would sit dreaming over the ledger with dull eyes and drawn brows, and her mental depression painted sharp lines about mouth and nose, and found vent in occasional quarrels with her sister.

"Why that critical expression?" she said touchily, as Hildegard gazed at the table without a word of praise.

"Come, come, don't get nervous," answered the latter, "I think it all very charming, but a new idea for the napkins suddenly occurred to me."

She caught up the nearest napkin, in which a roll had already been placed, and began to form it into something that, she asserted, bore a remarkable resemblance to a lotus flower. This was one of her little talents. While busy at it, she glanced towards a bunch of beautiful orchids in a vase on the table, and remarked

lightly: "Say, sweet flower, you needn't have gone to such expense for those few females. What did it cost?"

"Nothing," said Martha, with a shrug.

"What's the matter?" asked Hildegard; "you are as red as a peony. You know I don't want you to buy that sort of thing out of your own money."

"I didn't," replied Martha, blushing hotly. "The flowers are from — oh, you can guess."

"From Arnulf?"

"Yes, of course; anything as beautiful as that must come from him." She laughed nervously and made some quite unnecessary change in the table arrangements. She felt her sister's sharp glance resting on her, and after a short pause, she added: "He was here a moment ago and left a greeting for you."

Miss Hildegard took up a second napkin, and whistled between her closed teeth. Then, as if talking to herself, and without looking up, she remarked: "I don't like that affair at all."

"I know for myself what is right and what is not," Martha roused angrily but the trembling of her features showed that she was nearer to tears. "I thought it was the boy from the pas-

try shop and opened the door myself, or I should not have received him."

"Now don't get excited," said her sister soothingly. "I am not reproaching you. We are independent, sensible women, and can receive all the men we want to in our own home. It's nobody's business what we do. You can invite whom you want and see him alone, if you so desire. You can carry on all the affairs you like, too, even behind my back if it pleases you, but leave out Arnulf Rau."

"I don't see why," answered Martha hotly. "He's a married man whose wife is an intimate friend of ours!"

"That's just why," cut in Hildegard hastily and harshly. "You're such a sensible girl, of course I know the young windbags or the old fools would never be dangerous to you. But Arnulf Rau *is* dangerous, with his white hands and his confounded eyes. Don't deny it! Not one of them has interested you as he does. It would be ever so much worse than if you should take up with one of your foolish, sentimental boys. There couldn't one of them have worse intentions than he must have."

"Do you think so?" cried Martha in suppressed emotion, stepping close to her sister, her

eyes shining and her breath coming in quick gasps. "Then I will tell you what he has just declared — he cannot live without me, . . . he will get a divorce ——"

"Great Heavens!" burst from Miss Hildegard as she sat down suddenly on the nearest chair. She swallowed a sharp critical remark with difficulty, and after some little time added, in apparent calm: "Well — and you?"

"I was dreadfully frightened, naturally," answered Martha.

She stepped to the mirror, passed her hands over her deep black hair, and touched her fair heated face with her delicate handkerchief. Then she continued firmly, although her voice trembled: "I know one thing surely, and that is, that I have never loved any other man so much."

Hildegard threw her damask lotus flower angrily on the table and cried aloud: "Oh, see here, sweet flower, this is altogether too idiotic. I'd rather you ran away with some nice fellow. I'd be willing to support you both out of my own pocket, rather than have this sort of thing happen."

"Oh, yes, you can laugh." Martha was really

angry. "Of course, you can never understand, you with your heartlessness ——"

"Bother heartlessness," interrupted the elder sister roughly. "If it's the heart that throws foolish women at the wrong man, then I haven't any heart. And I have no heart to encourage you in such utter idiocy, either."

"Ah, you! You!" Shaking with rage, Martha took a few quick steps towards her sister. "You have spoiled everything for me! It is all your fault, if I have to drag out this hideous failure of a life ——"

"My fault? And how?"

"Because you frighten the men away. You are worse than the worst mother-in-law, with your dreadful 'common sense' and your unwomanly coarseness. You make a mock of all tender feelings, in your eyes everything becomes ridiculous, everything one longs for, when one has to vegetate in lovelessness as I do. You — you — where you tread, no flowers can grow ——!"

She confronted her sister with anger blazing in her eyes, then suddenly turned and left the room.

When the servant entered a few moments later, Miss Hildegard stood at the open window, blowing her nose with unnatural energy. She

couldn't let the stupid thing see she had been crying.

Half an hour later the guests began to arrive. First to come was Miss Agatha Echdeler, Chairman of the Propaganda Committee for the Evolution of the Feminine Psyche. This association had another and an easier name, but the learned ladies preferred to speak of it thus among themselves. Miss Echdeler was a slender, stately woman, in the late thirties, of assured carriage and intelligent, amiable expression. In contrast with the boyish style affected by Hildegard Haider, her appearance and manners were most ladylike. After her came Mrs. von Grotzinger, a rotund little person with short gray hair and a face like a full moon, who dressed quietly but in execrable taste. Mrs. von Grotzinger was a worthy lady who spent her life doing much good with her slender means. It was asserted that she had a husband living, but no one had ever seen him. Rumor whispered that he had fled into the Unknown years before, in terror of the strong mind of his better half. Mrs. von Grotzinger was more conspicuous in ordinary conversation by reason of her masculine voice than because of the brilliancy of her remarks, and she appeared to take more enjoyment in the smoking

of strong cigars than in the utterance of daring speeches. She could smoke the heaviest stogies without the tremor of a muscle.

Then came the inseparables, Mrs. Stummer and Miss Wiesbeck. The first had a delicate, fine-cut face like an antique cameo, set on a firm strong throat, and carried herself like a handsome boy in woman's clothes. The pale little creature at her side looked as though a zephyr might blow her over. She was the narrow-chested, sharp-nosed daughter of a country pastor, who had had courage enough to run away from her home to study philosophy in Zürich, "just for fun," as she expressed it, for even she herself could not see any outlook for the practical utilization of her knowledge. She picked up a little money by coaching pupils for the Girls' High School, and managed to live largely through the help of better situated friends. Mrs. Stummer had really had a husband once, but had obtained a divorce from him after a very short time. As she explained it, she had not been able to discover, during the few months of her married life, what possible use she could have for the gentleman. She found him only an obstacle in her pursuit of higher ideals. The separation had been entirely friendly, and Mr.

Stummer visited his wife occasionally, usually when in need of money, as she had more of that commodity than her simple tastes required. The last to come was Claire de Fries, accompanied by Dr. Jur. Babette Girel, a slender, well-knit figure in a simple black velvet gown, which set off to advantage her fine spirituelle face with its aquiline features. Dr. Girel had already won a name as an eloquent and keen-witted defender of the principles of emancipation for her sex.

When all were there, the guests took their places at table, and devoted themselves in noticeable seriousness and comparative quiet to the enjoyment of the good things offered by the firm of Moritz Haider's Daughters. Cooks and the kitchen were the main topics of conversation, just as they would have been at the outset of an ordinary woman's party. And only in that these ladies ate heartily, like hungry human beings, instead of merely picking at their food, did they show their superiority to the weaker members of their sex. The fact that no alcoholic drinks were passed may have been in part reason for the mildness of the conversation, but the general gravity was caused by the evident depression of the hostesses. Miss Martha Haider had calmed herself sufficiently that neither her complexion

nor her behavior showed any traces of her recent emotion, and Miss Hildegard took particular pains to appear most loving towards her sister. But the observing eyes of the intimates of the house saw that something untoward had occurred.

Supper over, the guests wandered into the living room, an apartment of moderate size furnished in odd but charming style, with all sorts of knickknacks and curiosities. Cigarettes were passed — Mrs. von Grotzinger lighting her own Havana. Then Miss Hildegard ordered the big punchbowl brought in, setting it down on the carpet. She threw in two bottles of champagne, assuring her temperance guests that it was only fruit juice with soda [which was a shameless lie, inasmuch as the punch was made of best Palatine wine and champagne, half and half]; then she added some slices of lemon, and finally, dreadful to relate, a dash of brandy.

The guests declared the punch delicious, and the anti-alcohol party praised it as a triumph of the temperance drink industry. Mrs. Stummer and Miss Wiesbeck stretched themselves with Miss Hildegard on the carpet around the punchbowl; Miss de Fries lay at full length on a low divan, and Martha Haider, who cherished a schoolgirl's admiration for the beautiful Frisian,

sat down on the fur robe at her feet. Mrs. von Grotzinger was so lost in a deep arm-chair that her feet scarcely touched the floor, and Babette Girel stood with Agatha Echdeler at the open window, gazing smilingly at the pretty groups.

Praise of the cheering beverage seemed to have exhausted conversational resources again, and Hildegard exclaimed angrily: "Why, girls, aren't you stupid to-night! I'll have to turn a somersault to waken you up a bit." She was up in a jiffy, stepping over the slender Miss Wiesbeck, and, placing herself in the center of the room, she really did turn a neat somersault without any shock to decency, as she always wore knickerbockers under her skirt.

But this acrobatic feat was nothing new to the guests, so the applause was but mild, and silence would have fallen again, had not Dr. Girel asked Dr. de Fries, aloud but without any particular excitement, whether it was true that she was to marry her lover, Dr. Reithmeyer.

"So Box has been telling tales?" asked Claire, without changing her comfortable and becoming position on the divan.

"Of course. I always do when some stupidity is threatening, which an open discussion might possibly avert," was Hildegard's explanation.

"Open discussion?" laughed the beautiful Claire. "Would you call a mass meeting to discuss my case?"

"Well, I was thinking of our own intimate circle here — the windows are open, that makes it a public meeting."

"Is that a joke?" inquired Mrs. von Grotzinger sleepily. "I can't laugh, I have eaten too much."

Miss Echdeler turned to Claire. "Then you really intend to marry?"

Miss de Fries returned: "It looks as if I must, but I don't want to."

"Bravo! Prosit," squeaked Miss Wiesbeck, raising her glass to her fellow-student.

"Oh, don't be silly," said Box. "I don't see why we can't talk this matter over sensibly. I should hope we were competent to do that much."

"I have no objections," said Miss Claire, calmly. "If I can lie here comfortably as I do now, you can say anything you want to about this case of Reithmeyer vs. Fries. I must confess, I am beginning to have my doubts. I can't quite decide whether my resistance is a sign of strength of character, or merely of obstinacy. After all, it is no crime to marry."

"For my part, I prefer free love," grunted

Mrs. von Grotzinger in her comfortable bass tones. They all laughed, but the good lady took no offense and joined in the merriment herself.

"We needn't discuss love here," declared Miss Wiesbeck with precocious wisdom, whereat Martha Haider, who disliked the sharp-nosed girl, fluted back at her in sweetest tones:

"Ah, your mind is quite made up as to love? Oh, please, tell us something definite about it then."

The student of philosophy saw the irony, and answered with hesitation: "Love — oh, well, love — love is entirely a private, personal matter."

This started the most of them laughing violently again, until Dr. Girel's soft, rich voice cut through the noise.

"Why, ladies, aren't you ashamed of yourselves to bid for laughter in this way? One would think you were in the German Parliament."

"Bravo!" "Parliament indeed!" "Fie!" came the merry answers, and then Dr. Girel suggested arranging a formal law-court. Hildegard Haider, as the initiated person, was to narrate the *species facti.*

Box seated herself cross-legged on the divan

by Claire de Fries, and carried out her part of the task with sufficient volubility. The ladies listened in eager attention, and then Dr. Girel opened the proceedings by asking Miss de Fries if she had any corrections to make. As this was not the case, Dr. Girel proceeded to deliver the following speech:

"Ladies! Permit me to give you a summing up of this case, following the statement we have just listened to. Mr. X. and Miss Y., because of mutual so-called love, had entered into a free companionship, with no legal liabilities on either side. This companionship has now lasted for some time, to the mutual satisfaction of the parties concerned, and through its high intellectual character it has, I might say, taken on the qualities of an ideal marriage relation. Now, however, Mr. X. desires to change this ideal marriage to a conventionally lawful one, i. e., to a legalized, indissolvable contract, by which Miss Y. shall give herself, of her own free will, and for the rest of her life, into the guardianship of Mr. X.; shall take upon herself, besides the so-called natural duties, a number of unnatural, viz., social duties; and according to the principle, *mulier in ecclesia taceat,* to agree to all rules laid down by X., and to forever after hold her peace."

Miss Wiesbeck could not resist a murmured, "Horrible!"

Babette Girel continued calmly: "The question is now put to this honorable assemblage, whether, from the point of view of our endeavors for the healthy evolution of the Feminine Psyche, our comrade Y. may be allowed to deny her hitherto nobly defended principles for the sake of material reasons?"

"No!" "Never!" "*Jamais, non licet!* — brutal force!" "masculine selfishness!" "clumsy snare!"

The excited women all spoke at once.

Not having a bell, Dr. Girel rapped on her glass with a paper knife and commanded order. "Does anyone wish to discuss the question?" she asked with droll gravity.

Mrs. von Grotzinger raised her short fat forefinger, and turning to the beautiful woman on the divan, she said with a motherly smile, "Don't let them fool you, Frieschen. I know how hard it is to resist a man when he pleads so charmingly. As I said, I prefer free love."

Without waiting for permission to talk, Mrs. Stummer broke in: "I know marriage, I can say a thing or two also. The men can ruin and break us in free love just as well as in marriage

if they want to. The main point is what stuff we ourselves are made of. Marriage is good enough for the ordinary woman, she is happiest under the yoke, anyway — and for the free woman even the freest love is not free enough, for love of itself means submission for us. But I don't see why a woman must love some *man!* Give your love to science, Miss de Fries, to serve her is an honor."

"Bravo, bravo," squeaked Wiesbeck in admiration. "I love only science myself and get along finely."

"You don't pick up much flesh in the process, my child," teased Mrs. von Grotzinger good-naturedly. "It looks to me as if science did not reciprocate your feelings. One can remain as thin as you are only in platonic affairs."

This started a storm of talk, laughter, jokes, and serious argument over the case in question. They nearly all talked at once, broke up into groups of two or three, grew warm and began to scream, just as men do under the same circumstances. Miss Girel gave up her attempt at parliamentary procedure and sat down in a corner with Box and Miss Echdeler, to exchange serious opinions. Miss de Fries, who was most concerned in it all, was much the most composed, and

during the height of the noise, she bent over Martha Haider, and asked, smiling, "What would you do in my case, dear?"

The pretty girl started up from her dreaming, and had to pull herself together before she could answer. Then she whispered, blushing, "I? Ah, if anyone loved me as much as that, I should be more than happy to belong to him before all the world, and for the rest of my life."

Claire passed her hand tenderly over the smooth, Madonna-like face. "Little woman," she said gently, "does that really make you so happy? Always to live for some *master,* never for yourself?"

Martha sighed and could find no answer. Then she stood up and said carelessly: "You would only laugh at me, anyway." She took up the silver cake basket and went the round of the company. The beautiful Frisian rose also, lit a fresh cigarette and listened absently to the excited argument of the various groups. They had all gone wide astray from the original theme, the question of whether she would marry or not, and were each one of them riding her favorite hobby.

Mrs. Stummer quarreled with Mrs. von Grotzinger about the High School for Girls; she was passionately in favor of it, her opponent equally

obstinate in the opposition. Wiesbeck was laying down the law to the smiling Miss Echdeler about the right of each one of us to live out his or her own individuality, a right that woman must fight for as well as man. Miss Echdeler had heard it all a thousand times before, but she let the student talk on. It was wholesome rhetorical practice and the good cause of mental emancipation needed easy speakers. Babette Girel had launched on her favorite topic, the legal rights of illegitimate children. Her friend Hildegard challenged her by the remark that a child was good for any woman, was necessary indeed for most of them, but that she could not see why a woman who had made herself mentally free, as had Claire de Fries, should not have a child without a legalized husband. It would be only a pleasure for a strong character to struggle against the prejudices of society.

Claire sat down by these two and listened attentively. In the early stage of her relations with Dr. Reithmeyer she had decided not to have a child until she had finished her studies and won an independent position for herself. Then, however, she did not wish any longer to evade her natural mission, her very highest duty as a woman. She was a serious nature and desired to

furnish in herself the proof that modern woman is not only mentally equal to man, but is morally his superior, in that for her love is not merely a passing pleasure, but the fulfillment of a holy duty to the race. But she had often considered the very uncomfortable position which must be the lot of a child coming into the world in what was still called a forbidden manner. And she seriously asked herself whether the selfishness of a woman who sacrificed the happiness of her children to her own desire for mental freedom was not just as bad, from the point of view of higher morality, as the selfishness of man, who for his own convenience puts into the laws of his country the doctrine of the non-relationship of the father to his natural child.

She had long felt that if she should ever let herself be persuaded to marry, it would be only for the sake of the children. And this was just the point touched upon by Dr. Girel in her calm, clear manner.

"Nonsense!" interrupted Box. "It's good for these children to be knocked about a bit, especially for the girls. The future needs women who have been toughened."

"But much good material is wasted in the knocking about," answered Babette Girel, with

quiet gravity. "The toughened woman will do our cause little good; she will only help to chase beauty and joy and goodness more and more from our prosaic world."

"Can't see it that way," declared Box obstinately. "Health is the best beauty, and all this talk of the Good, and the True, and the Beautiful, only makes dish-rags of us."

"Your idea of toughening makes the sexless woman," joined in Claire de Fries. "And she is a horror to the men as well as to herself. Don't forget that, Box."

"Dear, dear, how tender you are of the poor men," mocked Hildegard. "This foolish pity for men is really the very worst among the many weaknesses of our sex. Why do so many, even of the cleverest women, get caught? Simply because the men know how to appeal to their pity. They know how to make a woman believe they can't live without her, or that they would go crazy, or go quite to the dogs, if she won't listen to them, and stretch out her rescuing hand as a good angel. Nasty comedy! Just let any one of them come to me with such stuff! I'd land him a good whack right and left for his pains."

"Don't be alarmed," laughed the beautiful Claire, "they'll not bother you."

Hildegard reddened with anger. "Oho, all that about the sexless woman was meant for me, was it? My dear Donna Clara, if you think that I, or any woman who is not absolutely bedridden, couldn't capture a man, you are much mistaken. Great art that! When a woman *really* wants to, she can get *any* man."

"Well, as far as the ways of men are concerned," Claire smiled mockingly, "your opinions are not hampered in the least by an acquaintance with facts."

"Indeed." Box was really angry. "So you think I couldn't possibly win a man? Bosh! Men are so weak in temptation that we need but to beckon ever so slightly to gather them into our net, all of them, without distinction of age, position, or rank."

Babette tried to sooth her, but she was beyond control. The scene with her sister earlier in the evening had shaken her nerves so that she was hardly conscious of what she was saying. "If I wanted to humiliate a man, I should not even take the trouble to bother myself about him. I would simply let my cook win him."

"Hear! Hear!" laughed Mrs. von Grotzinger. The others became interested now, and

turned to the group with half smiling, half embarrassed attention.

"You forget one thing, my dear Box," said Claire de Fries, trying to control her annoyance at the turn the conversation had taken. "It is only *after* enjoyment that men become the cynics you think them. At first they are greater idealists even than we are, and a victory which costs nothing does not allure them at all."

"Indeed, I'll prove the contrary!" cried Hildegard with flashing eyes. "In two weeks' time I'll bring you down a stag of ten."

A general silence ensued; this frivolity was a little too much for the ladies. They were greatly embarrassed, and discovered with remarkable unanimity that they wanted another glass of punch and more cake. Eating and drinking seemed somehow to soften the unpleasantness of the situation.

As no one applauded her joke, Box laughed herself. Wise Miss Echdeler, who had felt the foolish boasting most keenly, stepped behind her friend, patted her on the shoulder and said: "That's right, laugh at yourself, for it was a very *bad* joke." And turning to the others, she continued: "Don't be alarmed ladies, Box has

merely fired a shot in the air. She has her revolver always with her when she rides out, but there's been no chance to try it yet, so she thought it might be fun to startle our delicate ears with its noise. No, my friends, we can continue to develop as we have done. I have no fear that our chosen path may lead us to take up with the rowdyism of male students."

Box suddenly realized that she had made a mistake, and she pressed Miss Echdeler's hand, grateful for her efforts to restore the lost joviality.

The dangerous subject was tacitly dropped, and the conversation spread itself somewhat forcibly over all sorts of innocuous themes, such as drama, literature, and fashions. Finally Dr. Girel consented to play a violin solo. She was a remarkably talented lady, who knew much and could do much, but she *could not* play the violin. However no one seemed to think she demanded attention for her performance and the conversation went on as before.

Miss de Fries looked about for Martha, but could not see her. She left the living-room and found the girl alone in the dining-room, standing at the open window, gazing out into the night. She went to her, laid her arm about her

pressing her closely and asked: "Well, dearie, what was the trouble between you?"

Martha let her dark head fall on the breast of her tall friend, and whispered shyly under the coming tears: "Oh, dear, it is dreadful to have no one to whom I can talk."

"Talk to me," said Claire, kindly. "I don't think I am quite as sadly sensible as the others. Come and see me to-morrow evening, I will arrange to be alone."

The ladies in the living-room began to feel bored. It wasn't safe to work up a good quarrel for fear of unpleasant contretemps, and there wasn't much more to say anyhow. The alcohol that had been smuggled in began to go to their heads; some were alarmed because of their uncalled-for merriment, others simply sleepy. No one in particular seemed to have started the leave-taking, but all the guests were gone shortly before midnight. They were profuse in their thanks for the charming evening, and Mrs. von Grotzinger laid a fifty pfennig piece on the kitchen table for the cook.

Box accompanied them down the stairs to open the front door. She stood at the court gate, gnawing her lips, until the voices of the departing ones had lost themselves in the quiet street.

Upstairs again, she sent Martha to bed and occupied herself for about an hour in clearing up. When she finally sought her bed, Martha was already fast asleep like a comforted child, but Hildegard heard three o'clock strike before the God of Dreams took her pityingly to his arms. Disgusting! even Morpheus was a man. Was there no other way for a sensible woman to find her well-earned rest?

CHAPTER III

MISS HILDEGARD HAIDER awoke late the following morning. Martha had to call her, something that had never happened before. Her head ached badly from lack of sleep. Her temperance punch might have had something to do with it too, for in her excitement she had sampled it more copiously than had any of her guests. She ate breakfast in the worst possible mood, and spoke scarcely three words to her sister. Not until they were on their way to the office did Martha attempt to break the threatening silence with the question as to whether this ill-treatment was intended as a punishment for her, because a man loved her enough to make a great sacrifice for her sake.

"Haven't you got that crotchet out of your head yet?" answered Box crossly. "I thought you would have forgotten the stupid affair overnight."

"It doesn't strike me as particularly stupid," said Martha, defiantly. "He says his wife does

not understand him, and that we were born for one another."

"Stuff and nonsense," cut in Box. "Men in love all spill over with such talk. But just try to keep him to his word, and see how quickly he retreats. It isn't true anyhow, his wife understands him very well; no one better. What is there so very remarkable back of his bombastic speeches? According to him, nothing that anyone else does, or has done, is worth anything. To hear him talk you would think he was the only man of the century to know anything at all about art or literature. But what does he write himself? A few pretty essays a year, now and then a play that is never performed, or a novel that is so boresome no one wants to read it. His wife is much the cleverer of the two, if she doesn't use such high-sounding words. She sees through his poses completely, but she knows how to make him believe she is looking up to him in admiration. Then he is happy, and she has her peace and comfort, a handsome husband, and a luxurious life. No, my angel, your Arnulf Rau is a handsome man, and a rich man, and that ends it. If he were not rich, he'd have starved on his wisdom long ago. There's any number of men just like him among the artists and writers, and

ninety-nine per cent of those born rich are the same sort of stuff. All that kind of man can do is to idle away the hours, and to torment those around him. Besides which, he drinks."

"That's not true. It's too horrid of you!" Martha was almost in tears, but she did not wish to attract the attention of the passers-by, so she clenched her teeth, and in a few moments had controlled herself sufficiently to continue: "You don't know how much a strong man can stand," she said with an upward glance of her beautiful soft eyes. "And if he *does* drink a little more than usual now, he probably does it to drown his sorrow."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Box with ironclad emphasis. This seemed to her to express her opinion on the subject with ample sufficiency, for she said not another word until they reached the office.

The windows were opened, the correspondence attended to, and the "young man" received his instructions for the stock exchange. The owners of the firm of Moritz Haider's Daughters could not enter the sacred halls themselves, and were therefore compelled to stand outside the doors and let their clerk tell them of conditions within, and fulfill their orders. The day's duties went on in their accustomed way. Martha at-

tended to the correspondence and Hildegard buried herself in the ledger. But the lines of figures seemed to have no meaning to-day, her thoughts were elsewhere. These stupid love affairs, why cannot one thrust the stuff out of one's brain with a single exertion of the will? Too idiotic! And then this ugly feeling that she had made a fool of herself before her friends with her silly boasting. Still, it *had* been rather annoying, the ironical remarks of the de Fries girl, and the general doubt in the possibility that she, Hildegard Haider, who had carried many a difficult enterprise successfully to a close, could make a man fall in love with her! Of itself, the question did not interest her. *She* didn't need a man, thank fortune, but she would like to show those women that she knew men better than they did, and that a woman had really only to wish it, to get anything she desired from the so-called stronger sex. She wouldn't say another word about it to anyone, but she would just catch the chosen object by the collar, and shake him until he dropped at her feet, murmuring foolishness. She drew a glowing mental picture of her triumph, and arranged the entire plan of battle. One trifle alone was still wanting and that was the proper subject for the experiment. She

knew men enough, business friends, married and unmarried. But it would hardly be wise, and might injure the good name of the firm, if she took up with one of the married ones. The others would be too easy a prey, for she was considered a good catch, and she knew that any vows addressed to her would be made more because of her bank account than for her personal charms. She must find someone who did not know that she was a banker, some man who saw in her only a well-built, bright girl of mature years.

A customer happened in just then, to ask if this were the proper moment to sell certain securities. Without giving the matter much thought, she answered in the negative, saying that the stock was bound to rise shortly. But the man had scarcely left the office when she remembered having heard on good authority that the enterprise in question was on the brink of disaster. Her business conscience awoke, and she sat down to write the customer the true state of the case, but it was so hard for her to concentrate her thoughts that the few lines took half an hour in the writing. Her headache was unbearable. She threw down the pen, told her sister she could do no more work that day, and asked her to look after things. Martha protested, for

after Box's friendly admonitions she was not particularly clear as to brain herself.

"I don't care! I can't and I won't stay, even if I have to shut up the old place!" With this declaration Box left the office. She hurried home, hung up her long skirt, put on her cap, then sprang on her wheel and made quick time out of the city. In her hurry she even forgot Schampus — if he knew she was out wheeling without him, he would never forgive her!

She thought of the dog a moment, then decided it was better not to think at all. It isn't safe to indulge in thought when riding a wheel anyway, which is one of the chief good qualities of this ideal mode of locomotion. She rode along the Isar to Thalkirchen, pushed her wheel up the hill, then took the road past the villas of Ludwigshöhe, toward Grosshesselohe. It was a beautiful day, a trifle hot perhaps, and the road not of the best, for the sun had made hard ridges of the ruts left by the last rain, and made great caution necessary. But it was so quiet and so peaceful, the sky so clear, and the air so pure and full of forest odors, and then, best of all, one couldn't think! Suppose she experimented on Dr. Reithmeyer? That *would* be a triumph. It was true that he was supposed to be much in

love with his Claire, he even wanted to marry her. Still, the affair had lasted two years already, and he was only a man. What a fine idea! But scarce had it occurred to her, when Box found herself lying beside her machine on the edge of the road. The rear wheel had caught in a hard deep rut and bowled her over. The right handle bar hit her a blow on the shoulder, and the pedal raised a painful lump on her leg, besides tearing a great hole in her stocking. Miss Hildegard swore aloud, and clasped her shoulder with one hand and her leg with the other. Then she gave the bicycle an angry kick and sat upright to take stock of the situation. The mishap had occurred in the uphill cut between Ludwigshöhe and the railroad bridge at Grosshesselohe. Worst of all she hadn't even a pin with her to make the necessary repairs to her stocking, and the bumps hurt. She was breathless and perspiring besides, from the sharp pace at which she had been riding. She pushed her wheel up the gentle incline at the side of the road until it was hidden by the trees, and then she looked about for a comfortable place to rest. But there were ants in one spot, too much underbrush in another, stones or toadstools elsewhere, or too much sunlight; nothing quite suited her

and she must have gone at least fifty paces from the roadway without finding a proper place.

Suddenly she saw something gleaming between the trees. It was two bicycles, a man's and a woman's, leaning amicably one on the other. Box crept carefully a few steps further, then stopped to listen, for she had heard voices although the words were indistinguishable. Just a little beyond she came to the edge of a tiny precipice and looked down on a little trough-like hollow, and there, on the opposite flower-strewn slope, she saw the owners of the two handsome machines. *She* sat in the grass with her lap full of flowers, weaving a wreath, and *he* lay outstretched before her, gazing at her, and tenderly stroking her legs in their gray silk stockings. It was really a very pretty picture, and Box ducked noiselessly behind the nearest bush, so as not to disturb the pair. It was a pity she could not hear what he was saying to her, but she could judge from the lady's face that it must have been something very agreeable, for she looked blissfully happy, and ran her fingers through his hair now and then with a laughing warning. "Oh, no! please don't! you mustn't say such things! but you *are* a dear boy!"

Her wreath was finished, and she took off her

hat to press the flowers on her heavy pale blonde hair.

"Am I pretty?" she cried merrily, brushing the unused blossoms from her lap. Her companion threw himself around, laid his head on her knee, and held out his arms. He asked a question so softly that Box could not hear it, but she heard the answer in the woman's clear high voice. "Of course, I love you very much, but you mustn't ——"

But he let her go no further, and drew her head down to his, closing her mouth with kisses. Then he threw himself around again, and pressed her to him so violently that the dainty little figure was lost behind his broad back. And all of a sudden they both rolled down the slope, falling apart, and she scolded him and laughed, and he laughed, too, and they brushed the pine needles from each other's clothes, and put on their hats again. Her pretty wreath was crushed and broken, and he had lost his penknife.

"That's the punishment," she said. "You *wouldn't* be good!" And he kissed her again, and she kissed him, and finally they found the knife and walked slowly to the wheels, his arm around her waist, her hand on his shoulder.

Miss Hildegard Haider remained in her

hiding place, pondering deeply. Now she had seen it for herself, with her own eyes, this celebrated love-making they talked so much about. Hm! it really was very pretty, quite as charming, indeed, as the silly poems make it out to be. She would very much have liked to know what sort of people these two were — the gentleman looked familiar to her somehow, but she had not been able to see his face plainly. She sprang to her feet, forgetting the bumps and the hole in her stocking; she must follow this couple and see what happened further, for she wanted to find out how one must act when in love. She wanted to learn all about it this very day, this beautiful summer day!

She pushed her machine back to the road, but in the moment of mounting discovered that the steering gear had been bent by the fall. As she was looking over her tools for the proper screwdriver, a cyclist pedaling past stopped, jumped off his wheel beside her and inquired, with a polite raising of his cap: "You have had a mishap? Can I be of service?"

Box replied with some indefinite phrases, for it was one of her many principles not to accept such chance attentions. But the young man was not to be deterred from examining the damage.

He calmly took the tools from her hand, and set the bar straight again. Without being asked, he gave his opinion as to the style of her machine, and was anxious to know if she had hurt herself in the fall.

By rights, Box should have found all this somewhat officious, but the young man's manner was so easy and amiable that she could not be angry with him. Smilingly, she showed him the hole in her stocking.

"Good," he exclaimed merrily, "I can remedy that." He took a tiny leather case from his pocket, and showed her that it contained some medicines, court plaster, bandage and sewing materials.

"I have carried this case as long as I have been riding a wheel," he continued, "and have never yet had occasion to use it. I bless your mishap! If you will permit me, I will try my very defective talent for sewing on your stocking."

Box found herself thinking this young man very agreeable. She did not raise much objection to his assistance, for she was a rank amateur in such matters. So she sat down at the roadside while he knelt before her, and with needle and thread — white thread, it must be confessed

— pulled together the huge three-cornered hole in her black stocking. She declared his performance most satisfactory, considering the circumstances.

"Wait a moment, I can improve on it," he exclaimed, and taking a fountain pen from his pocket, he skillfully colored the white thread with the ink. "There now," he cried, pleased with his good idea, "you must confess I have done my work marvelously well."

"I shall take pleasure in recommending you to my friends," she answered in amusement, and took the hand he offered to assist her in rising. Never before had she let a man help her on her feet, but this one was really very nice. She thought him quite good-looking, too, although he was not in any way remarkable in appearance. He was rather small, apparently about her own size, but well built, with plenty of muscle, as was shown by the modishly cut suit he wore. His face had an expression of good-natured intelligence, the eyes were too small and too colorless, the nose too flat and the lips too thin, while the beard was lacking entirely. But his brown hair was prettily curled, his ears remarkably small and well-shaped, as were also his hands and feet. His skin was pale, and showed many little blem-

ishes — but what young man hasn't a pimple or two? Miss Hildegard Haider was ready to swear that even Juliet's Romeo must have had pimples, although Shakespeare does not make any mention of the fact.

Here was a stroke of luck! This was the very object she was wishing for, this young man should be the victim for her experiment! Who might he be? He was of good family apparently, and a stranger, for he spoke with an interesting foreign accent. And he knew her as little as she knew him, that was the main thing.

"Were you going this way, and would you allow me to accompany you?" he asked politely, as they made ready to mount their wheels.

"Oh, please — that is ——" Box hesitated. She really didn't know what the average young German girl would do in such a case. An added allurement through gentle resistance would probably be considered the proper thing, but she didn't know just how to show this gentle resistance. She felt herself blushing in her embarrassment. Heavens, she *could* blush! In her joy at the discovery she blurted out:

"All right, come along then; want to go to Grunwald?"

"With the greatest pleasure, anywhere you say."

They rode to the railway station, and pushed their wheels across the bridge, from which the well-known view over Munich and the Isar valley can be enjoyed. Half-way over, they halted to admire the beauty of the picture.

"I am glad I am not alone on this bridge," remarked the young man. "The thought of a spring from here has something very alluring for me. The water below is like milk in a green glass. A bath in milk, a very poetic image, don't you think? And then a *salto mortale* in the face of the whole city, as it were, and yet in sun-bathed solitude — it has something so discreetly sensational about it. One would turn over two or three times en route, and the air pressure would kill one before the water was reached. *Suicide élégant!* Don't you agree with me?"

"He's trying to make himself interesting," she thought, but she said merely: "Famous idea that, but you'll leave the carrying out of it for some future time, won't you?"

"Who knows," he answered with a shrug which might mean anything. "What is life worth anyway? *My* life at least? This is not

the first bridge upon which I have stood with such thoughts, nor the first track-rail upon which I have longed to throw myself. I am four-and-twenty, ah, yes! but there are countries where youth cannot come to happy maturity. Permit me to introduce myself, by the way."

He put his hand to his breast pocket, took out a dainty card-case of green leather, ornamented with gold initials surmounted by a crown, and handed her his card.

Le Baron Raoul de Kerkhove,
Docteur en philosophie.

"Ah, you are French — or Belgian, perhaps? From Flanders, judging by your name?" queried Hildegard, with curiosity.

"No, I am from the Baltic Provinces, *refugié,*" he replied, seeking her glance with an elegiac expression which seemed to say: "Can you now measure my sorrow?"

She made a somewhat unsuccessful attempt at a courtesy. "My name is Hildegard Schneider. I am visiting an aunt here."

"An aunt? Oh, dear," he echoed.

"Does that disturb you?"

"A little perhaps." He smiled gently. "Some aunts are so disagreeable."

"Mine is quite passable," said Box, amused.

"It would seem so, since she allows you to ride out unattended."

"Allows me? How delightful."

"You appear to be of a very independent nature."

"Yes, I fancy one could call it that," giggled Box.

He looked at her, and gave a droll sigh.

"Does that disturb you, also?" she asked.

"Oh, no! quite the contrary. Really independent women are so rare, and we need them sorely."

"But why do you sigh?"

"Did I sigh? Oh, about life in general, I fancy; it has so much that is beautiful."

"Why, yes, I believe you. For instance, beautiful summer days, beautiful views, beautiful cycle paths ——"

"Yes, and by the roadside sit beautiful young ladies, with beautiful holes in their stockings."

"A sweet young man," thought Box, and suggested that they continue their ride. They naturally chose the wood path, as do all sensible cyclists, for wheeling is forbidden there. She rode on ahead to set the pace, and he followed close behind. The rubber tires glided noise-

lessly over the smooth carpet of needles, and every now and then the shining machines sprang gayly as young fawns over the tree roots stretching themselves like fat lazy snakes across the path. Miss Hildegard Haider was as happy as if she had just received a telegram to the effect that her Turkish Consols had gone up to 76¾, much happier, indeed. Her headache had disappeared entirely. What a charming young man this was, and so interesting, too! A Baron, *refugié,* Baltic Provinces, deep sorrow, *docteur en philosophie!* she had not imagined such good luck possible. How would he be likely to behave if she allured him into that hidden hollow on the return route? Anyway she would begin by making a wreath. Mercy! Was she falling in love with the young man? Nonsense! It was probable that by to-morrow morning she would think him a silly little monkey, but for the present moment he was just about right.

It was almost eleven o'clock when they reached Grunwald. They turned in at the Castle Inn, and were looking about for a pretty and shady seat when they suddenly became aware of another pair of cyclists. Hello! There were the couple from the flowery hollow, the large, brown-mixed gentleman and the charming blonde

in the white shirt waist, gray cloth knickerbockers and gray silk stockings. How pretty she was, with her graceful, almost boyishly slender figure and her rich ashen blond hair! And how well her clothes became her, fitting her with such easy natural style, from the simple straw hat with its white veil, down to the little black shoes. Box forgot her escort completely and stood in the entrance to the veranda, her eyes fixed on the charming picture.

But the lady touched her companion, and the brown-mixed gentleman turned to look at the intruders.

My goodness! Why, that was — of course it was! She had met him socially and in business, although he was not one of her more intimate circle of acquaintances; but there could be no mistake, it was Mr. Franz Xaver Pirngruber, the well-known genre painter.

"Well, well, well!" thought Box. Franz Xaver Pirngruber was a man of forty or thereabouts, most agreeably situated in life. For not only did he sell his pictures well, but he was also the possessor of a wealthy and beautiful wife, and six lovely children, who were a bone of contention among all the photographers of Munich.

"Just wait," thought Box. "I'll frighten

you, all right." And she walked briskly to the table where sat the happy couple, holding out her strong right hand to the brown-mixed gentleman. "Good morning, Mr. Pirngruber, delighted to meet you! It was sensible of you to come out and enjoy this lovely day instead of wasting it shut up in a studio. All well at home? How is Mrs. Pirngruber? I haven't seen her for some time."

She chatted on merrily, and Mr. Pirngruber's friendly open countenance expressed plainly that he would have preferred to answer her with a hearty, "Go to the devil!" But as a man of breeding, he said instead: "Many thanks, my wife is doing the watering places. About this time of year she begins to feel the necessity of showing herself at the most fashionable of them. I have too much to do to go with her, unfortunately. So you too have come out for the day, Miss Haider?"

"Schneider!" whispered Box, in alarmed haste. And as Mr. Pirngruber looked his astonishment, she added: "Please don't give me away; my name is Schneider to-day."

Mr. Pirngruber saw the young man in the background and understood. He smiled a mean-

ing smile and with a wave of his hand toward his beautiful companion, he said:

"Permit me to make you acquainted with my *niece,* Mrs. von Robiceck."

The ladies bowed politely to one another, and then Box motioned up her young man and introduced him:

"My *cousin,* Baron Raoul de Kerkhove, *docteur en philosophie.*"

Bows, meaning glances, four congenial souls had met and understood each other!

Mr. Pirngruber and Mrs. von Robiceck, (her name was probably as much Robiceck as Box's was Schneider) were already deep in the enjoyment of several pairs of white sausage with beer, and Box had no intention of hard-heartedly disturbing their idyl. After a few polite phrases she withdrew with her escort to a far corner of the garden, to sample likewise the white sausage. This delicately compounded specialty of the Munich sausage-maker's art, particularly when combined with the lighter brown beers, seems to exert a remarkably soothing influence on the nerves. Harmonious natures, such as retired grocers, royal policemen, and Bavarian deputies, consider the white sausage finer than the oyster.

Why, then, should not happy lovers enjoy its mild charms? Box ordered white sausage and beer.

But the conversation did not flourish, for Baron Raoul de Kerkhove was suddenly struck dumb. Hildegard noticed that he glanced over to the other couple more often than was natural or excusable, especially when he raised his glass to his lips, as he seemed to think she would not notice it then. Talk at the other table was not particularly lively either, and the two ate their lunch in evident impatience. There was a general feeling of embarrassment on both sides. In about ten minutes, Master Franz Xaver Pirngruber rose with his beautiful companion, and bowed politely as he passed their table, saying: "Au revoir, Miss Schneider. We're going for a little walk in the woods, please don't let us disturb you. By-by."

The charming lady bent her graceful head just a little, and the two ran lightly down the steep slope to the river. When they were out of hearing the Baron inquired eagerly who they were.

"Don't you know Franz Xaver Pirngruber?" exclaimed Box. "He is one of our favorite genre painters. You must have seen some of his things — funny peasant scenes, and such."

"Yes, I think I remember now," replied the Baron, indifferently. "And who is the charming young lady, Mrs. von Robiceck, I think it was?"

"Hm! yes; at least that was the name I understood," said Box, lifting her black brows. "A model probably, she is so well built."

"A model? Oh, you are joking!" cried the young man, almost shocked. "This exquisite delicacy, this aristocratic grace, oh, it is impossible!"

Box shrugged her shoulders. "Nothing is impossible in that quarter. There are non-professional models, too."

The young man sat silent and in thought. He pressed a white sausage through his teeth, then laid the empty skin on his plate with a grimace and remarked:

"That is an enjoyment one must be born to to appreciate."

As his companion had nothing to say to this, he drank a long swallow of beer, and asked for permission to light a cigarette. He took out a pretty case of Tula silver with gold lining, and offered it to Miss Schneider. She took a cigarette and they began to smoke. The Baron gazed thoughtfully at the gray rings that came in

artistic perfection from his lips, and made another remark: "It must be rather nice, sometimes, to be a painter."

"Think so?" said Box, crossly. "I consider painting a foolish sort of occupation, just about one degree better than fishing. But pardon me, if you *don't* paint, what are you doing here in Munich? All the strangers who come here, come to paint."

"Alas, I have no talent of any kind," answered the young man, pathetically. "Art is a sealed book to me. I am busied with the preparatory studies for a great sociological work, and then I am also preparing myself for a journey around the world. I am waiting for the outcome of a lawsuit upon which will depend whether I possess a million rubles more or less. At present, I must make out with a paltry ten thousand a year."

"I should imagine that was quite enough for one young man," said Box.

"I must make it do. I have a little furnished apartment of four rooms in the Schellingstrasse, but have not even a servant of my own. I must ride hired horses, something that was not prophesied at my cradle, I can assure you. My father died in Siberia, you understand, and the govern-

ment confiscated the greater part of his estates. But there is now a well-founded hope that my family may win its case. I am waiting the result here."

Box played with the silver cigarette case, and said some admiring words about it.

"Its actual value is not much," he answered, with an expressive glance of his gray eyes. "But I prize it as my most cherished treasure. It was a present from my uncle, Prince Krapotkin."

"Not the well-known Nihilist leader?"

"The same." He smiled strangely. "Please do not betray me. The police in your country have so much time on their hands to busy themselves with harmless foreigners."

"Mercy! are you one of those — of that kind, too?" exclaimed Box in lively curiosity.

"I, Mademoiselle?" he smiled his mysterious smile again. "I told you I am from the Baltic Provinces, my father died in Siberia — for the rest, I have studied philosophy."

"Oh dear! oh dear! what a delightfully uncanny young man you are," whispered Box highly amused. "You have so many pockets and so many pretty little cases in them, haven't

you a gold snuff-box with dynamite among the lot?"

"Mademoiselle, there are some things about which one should never joke," he answered gravely.

"As for instance?"

"For instance, one's country, and love."

"Aren't you going to eat that last sausage?" asked Box, rather inapropos. "Then please let me make this hideous dog happy with it." She threw the sausage to a lazy black monstrosity of a dog, which wandered about on crooked dachshund legs, betraying unabashed the disgrace of its ancestors, who had evidently had little regard for the purity of the race. Then she called the waitress, paid her little bill, (she would not hear of the Baron doing it,) and sprang up, saying cheerily: "Well, then, Baron, if it please you, let us walk in the woods and talk of love."

And just as the pretty Mrs. von Robiceck had done, she sprang down the steep slope to the river, followed by her escort. She soon left the path, and began to look for flowers on the slope under the shadow of the magnificent oaks and beeches. He helped her kindly, about as a good brother would aid an elder sister, and chatted

on about his childhood on the immense family estates in Livonia, about his scientific studies, and his proposed journey around the world. It was all very interesting, but a young man of breeding ought to be able to think of something else to say, when engaged in picking flowers with a young lady. If *she* had been in his place . . . ! But he was probably a little too young, he needed encouragement. She had gathered a clumsy bouquet and was hot and red from much bending, so she threw herself down on the thick moss and began to weave a wreath. She did it awkwardly, for it was many years since she had tried making flower wreaths.

Raoul de Kerkhove sat at her feet in the green moss, and smoked one cigarette after another. He had apparently no intention whatever of stroking her shins. She would not have advised him to do it, for, as she knew herself, she would probably have become exceedingly outspoken. But he might at least have tried! Instead of doing so, however, he preached a sermon on the ethics of capitalism, and explained to her that interest was the root of all evil in the world. "As long as money can produce money without work," this was his peroration, "we can have neither justice nor contentment."

"What do you expect, then?" answered Box, slightly irritated. "That's the law of nature. Like produces like, and without much work, either."

"But money is not a living organism," he said, with a weak attempt to smile at her joke.

"Isn't it?" she cried. "Well, I should rather say it is, and a very complicated one at that. You don't appear to know much about it."

Now that *was* stupid! She did not want him to see how much she knew about money matters, so she cut off further remark by telling him that they were wandering from the subject.

"From what subject?" he asked stupidly.

"Why, love!" she answered impatiently, and there! her wreath was torn again. She held the larger piece to her forehead, and asked, with as much coquetry as she could muster: "Do you think it becoming?"

He was just lighting a fifth cigarette on the stump of the fourth, but glanced at her out of the corner of his eye, and remarked dryly: "No, I don't."

"Oh, indeed?" said Box angrily. "And what would you have me wear, if you wanted me to look pretty?"

He thought the matter over, and then said,

suddenly beaming: "I know, a high silk hat!"

"A silk hat?"

"Yes; I would put you on a prancing steed, with a long flowing skirt and a shiny silk hat; I think you would look fine that way."

Box was only partially mollified. She threw away her unsuccessful wreath, and stretched herself flat on her back.

"Please give me another cigarette," she said. "Isn't this charming! I could dream here for hours."

He took out a match, but she stopped him, thinking of the danger of forest fires. A police warning as to throwing away burning matches was in evidence near by. "Let me have some of your own fire," she said with tender meaning, as she took her cigarette between her teeth and smiled at him. She could risk that, for she had beautiful white teeth.

Now if he had been at all promising he would have bent over her with his cigarette, would have gazed deep into her eyes, and kissed her without another word. But this unfortunate young Baron didn't seem to have a soul above mending stockings. He held out his cigarette to her at the end of his arm, as far away as possible. And when hers was lighted, he looked away again,

and let his eyes rest on her yellow leather Kneipp sandals.

Kneipp sandals were among Box's twenty-seven principles, but they certainly were not pretty.

"Do you admire the Russian girls?" queried Box after a time, with but mild interest.

"I suffer with them," answered the young man.

"They are said to be so soft in the joints," continued Box.

"Yes, particularly in the joints of the soul," he differentiated cleverly. "They can be bent for good or for bad, and when they love, they wear no corsets."

"Oh, how extremely interesting!" exclaimed Box with greater eagerness.

"I mean only figuratively, of course," explained the young man politely. "The women in this country seem to me to be always tightly laced — mentally, I mean; they are stiff to the touch, even if they have no bones."

"I'm not!" cried Box, stretching herself with pride.

"Oh, yes, Mademoiselle, you have bones," said the young Baron with quiet gravity.

This didn't satisfy Box either.

Raoul de Kerkhove smoked and meditated, suddenly he raised his finger, "Hark!"

"What is it? Oh, that is a chaffinch."

"I don't mean the bird, don't you hear that voice? That must be charming little Mrs. von Robiceck."

"Suppose it is?" said Box, hitting at an obstinate fly with her cap.

"Let's go and see what they are doing."

Box smiled maliciously: "I wouldn't go too near, if I were you."

But Raoul de Kerkhove was already on his feet and steering toward the direction from which the sweet silvery laugh seemed to come. So there was nothing for Box to do but to follow him. Fifty paces further they saw the brown-mixed coat and the white shirt waist shining through the silvered beech trunks, and then they saw Franz Xaver Pirngruber, the master of the humoristic brush, raise his so-called niece in his arms until she could reach the lowest branch of a great beech tree, whereupon the graceful little figure swung itself up, and climbed lithe as a cat from limb to limb.

"Good idea!" said Box, "I can do that too, and you needn't help me, either."

She found a tree that did not look difficult,

reached the first limb without assistance, and climbed on higher and higher. And when she was almost at the top under the very highest point, she looked down triumphantly on her young friend.

But he stood with his back to her, staring over to the other beech tree, where the sweet silvery laugh of pretty little Mrs. von Robiceck pearled out of the thickest green.

"Idiot!" thought Box, "I have greatly overrated you." And she climbed down again, knowing that she looked hot and scratched and at a disadvantage generally.

"Bravo!" said Raoul de Kerkhove. "I have never seen a lady rise to such heights!"

This was meant for a joke, but Box didn't think it at all funny. She declared with decision that she must go home now, and that he could stay and enjoy the society of charming little Mrs. von Robiceck as long as he liked.

"Oh!" was all he said, as he climbed back to the inn in her wake. When they stood by their wheels, he caught her hand and said with warm friendliness: "Are you angry with me, Mademoiselle? Truly I did not wish to offend you."

He seemed to think she was jealous, so she hastened to assure him that she was not in the

least angry. He raised her hand to his lips and kissed it. He was a nice boy after all — and so well brought up! Then they mounted their wheels and rode home in double quick time.

And on that day they loved no more, but they arranged a meeting for the following evening in the Blumensälen.

CHAPTER IV

MR. AND MRS. ARNULF RAU were invited to supper at the Reithmeyers. Claire de Fries had grown rather fond of Mrs. Katia Rau in the course of her visits to Munich. It was impossible for her to become very intimate with any woman, for she found warm friendships within her own sex wasteful of time, and little productive of mental gain. She could not endure the constant chattering for the mere pleasure of talking, which seems indispensable to friendship among women.

In this respect, almost more than in her serious interest for science, the beautiful Claire was an unusual woman. She could talk, and talk well, when the subject interested her, but otherwise she was very silent,— from sheer laziness. Physically Claire de Fries was astonishingly lazy. The one great hardship of her medical course was the amount of sitting or standing demanded by her studies, and she made up for this sacrifice by spending most of her leisure time flat on her

back. She was the only woman who did not ride a wheel, among her student comrades and circle of acquaintances. Mrs. Katia Rau did not wheel either, as her husband disapproved, and that was one reason why Claire found the clever little woman with the heavy dark hair and the mocking black eyes so sympathetic.

And she could not deny a strong measure of respect for Mr. Arnulf Rau, for he outdid her by considerable in laziness. If his magnificent laziness had not deterred this handsome man from preserving, in vile ink, all the world-moving ideas and the marvelous works of art which lay complete in his brain, he would undoubtedly have been looked up to by the entire civilized globe (and not, as at present, by himself alone) as its leading poet and thinker. He considered physical exertion unworthy a noble mind. "Let the herd sweat," he would say, and a celebrated aphorism, which he had improvised but never written down, ran:

> The Free Man heateth not himself,
> The Super-man sweateth not himself.

Following this principle faithfully, he had risen, if not to the status of the Super-man, at least to the possession of a stately Embonpoint.

Even Envy must acknowledge that he was a handsome man. He looked like Lohengrin or Siegfried, if one could imagine those worthies with hair and beard trimmed by a tasteful barber, and with the soft hands and well-kept nails of the modern man of breeding. A suit of carefully chosen cut and easy elegance, and a cravat which was always odd and of joyous coloring, completed the harmonious and agreeable picture of his outer man. As to the inner man, his wife alone could possibly have given a true account, for his words showed much intelligence, but no character. But his wife made no such revelation, she preferred to keep the sweet secret to herself. And in whom could this egotism of love be more pardonable, than in the wife of a man, who, because of his mental caliber, belonged by right to the whole world?

It was a cold supper, such as the cookless bachelor can procure from the nearest store; lobster salad, the finer kinds of sausages, and various cheeses. The meal had been eaten under the awning on the roof. Later, the cool of the Munich evening air had driven the party into the study, mainly out of respect for the great Arnulf, with whose views of life a catarrh was irreconcilable.

The coming Super-man, who will not perspire even when dancing, will also be spared the catarrhs of the common herd.

Claire de Fries lay outstretched on the divan as usual, while little Mrs. Katia crouched on the arm of the sofa at her head, running her pointed fingers through the blond curls. The gentlemen made themselves as comfortable as possible in the two armchairs. All were smoking cigarettes, with the exception of Arnulf Rau, who, as Master of Himself, was allowed the liberty of enjoying his own imported cigar. As was natural, the conversation had worked around to the subject which was still a burning question in this circle, that is,— whether the Reithmeyers should marry or not.

"Of course I understand entirely, theoretically," said Dr. Reithmeyer, playing nervously with the tassel of his chair, "that any official marriage is quite unnecessary for us, but——" He finished the sentence by a shrug of the shoulders.

"Theoretically, civilized man stands above nature," began Arnulf Rau after a short pause of meditation, "but in reality he has sold himself into the most unworthy slavery just because of it. To rule means to oppress, does it not? To say

man rules nature, means he oppresses her. He thinks out religions, and votes moral laws, by means of which all that is natural is considered sinful, and sins against nature declared moral. It is only his petty vanity of mental sovereignty which has induced man to relinquish his rights as Super-ape. If it is a possibility that in a state of super-mankind we shall have outgrown our adherence to the class of the mammalia, then perhaps, the thousand years of sacrifice of individual freedom may be worth while, but meantime — but pardon me, I am boring you, Madame Claire," he concluded, for he perceived that she was suppressing a yawn.

"Oh, no, indeed!" she answered, smiling; "I am quite of your opinion. It would really interest me to hear your ideas about marriage."

"About marriage? With pleasure," said Arnulf Rau. Running his soft white hand gently through his wavy blond hair he began to preach:

"Were marriage truly one of the natural laws, it would be the surest proof of the non-existence of a God. For inasmuch as this God has created man polygamous and woman monogamous by instinct, he has made a lasting union between them impossible from the first, which would therefore

disavow his claim to logical action. But as all else in the scheme of creation is built up in such flawless logical sequence, it follows that marriage cannot be the disposition either of God, or of Nature."

He made a slight pause. No one said anything. Dr. Reithmeyer smiled uncomfortably.

"The ideal marriage can be found many times in the natural world," continued the handsome Arnulf, with brows creased in thought. "Just look at the cock in the poultry yard, there you have a case in point. What pride and dignity are his! How nobly he bears himself, turning over the choicest tidbits to his womenkind, always ready for their protection, and making light of wounds received in battle. And then the hens with their stupid content, their cackling zeal in fulfillment of their duties! There you have family happiness, true nature, and individual freedom."

"Have you become a Mussulman, my dear friend?" asked Dr. Reithmeyer, slightly irritated.

"We need not introduce personalities," replied Arnulf mildly.

"I can quite understand that the life of the cock arouses your envy, my dear sirs," said Claire

de Fries, "but I doubt very much, if, in the present state of your development, you would be satisfied with a bunch of hens."

"That is exactly what my husband means to say," joined in Mrs. Katia. "That is just where the tragedy of modern marriage lies, in that the man, in the main, is still only the cock, whereas the majority of women have raised themselves as far above the hen standpoint, as man has raised himself above the apes."

"Precisely," agreed the handsome man. "As soon as woman desires to be anything else than the bearer of the new generation, who receives care and protection in return for her labor, she oversteps her natural sphere. For him who would raise himself above nature, there remains, as I said before, only the hardest slavery to mortal moral laws. The basic physical conditions for the sexes have not changed at all, but the moral viewpoint has changed immensely, and the consequence of this is, that while man's morality is not influenced in the least by his attitude on sexual questions, woman's morality suffers greatly by it."

"Prove it!" cried Claire, angrily.

"Must I, really?" asked Arnulf, stretching himself wearily. But as no one offered to spare

him the trouble, he continued, after some meditation: "It is very simple. Man's love-excitement is a short, acute disease, which leaves him stronger than before. He can have the love-fever to such a degree that he is capable of the most senseless actions, of crimes even. Yet when he has reached the goal of his longing he is healed, and what is more important, he is then no longer a sex apparatus, but only a power-producing organism. Love is a hampering obstacle for the machine, Man; for the machine, Woman, however, it is the *movens,* the *agens.* For the machine, Woman, is planned, I might say, merely to produce the fruits of love. Of course this female machine possesses the important integral parts in common with the male,— it could not be a machine without connecting-rod, flywheel, and governor,— and it can therefore use its power for other objects than the one for which it is especially planned. But this is always done at the cost of harm to the machine, and the product is invariably inferior."

"I dispute that," interpolated Claire.

"But without success," replied Arnulf disdainfully. "The few women who have accomplished anything worth while in art or science, were as a usual thing not womanly. Oh, fair Madame

Claire, spare yourself the pains," he put in with a deprecatory wave of the hand as he saw that she was about to speak, "you were about to name that unhappy Sonja Kowalewska, of course. One amorous professoress of mathematics proves as little against my assertion, as the fact that occasionally a calf is born with five legs or two heads, proves anything against the rule that calves have one head and four legs."

"By this style of argument," cried the beautiful Claire, looking at him with pity, "I could prove to you that man is the inferior product, for there *have* been women who have accomplished results in man's own field of labor, whereas no man has ever borne a child."

"Oh, Clärchen!" said Dr. Reithmeyer, gently.

There was a pause, for the handsome Arnulf was offended. His wife broke the silence with a droll sigh, and then announced with smiling pathos: "'Man's love is the world; woman's world is love,' thus sayeth P. A."

"Who's P. A.?" asked Dr. Reithmeyer calmly.

"Oh, my dears! how ignorant you are," laughed Mrs. Katia. "P. A. is Peter Altenberg, of course."

"Oh, the crazy young Viennese?"

"Crazy? Well, yes, in his style, if you will.

His intrusive manner might be called crazy, too, but I must confess I like Peter Altenberg. He is like a bee, he sees only flowers everywhere, draws out their sweetness, and gives it to the world as honey in return."

Arnulf came to the assistance of his wife. "That was very well said. A little honey spread on one's bread gives pleasure, but it would be dire punishment to have to eat out an entire honey-jar. A book by Peter Altenberg is a honey jar, but enjoyed in small doses it is productive of much keen pleasure. For the rest, he is the only one who sees it as I do."

"What 'it'?" asked Claire, lazily.

And Arnulf, "Oh, the world, life, everything."

Then said Claire again, after a pause: "But you have not yet told us how you look on marriage, a marriage between the cock-man and the modern woman."

"My fair friend, you would still have your fun with me?" returned Arnulf Rau, changing the position of his legs.

"How could I dare take such a liberty?" cried Claire in the voice of innocence, closing her eyes peacefully. But the poet and thinker could not quite come to a decision. He smoked thoughtfully and admired his finger nails. Dr. Reith-

meyer rose and walked up and down nervously.

"I am afraid all this won't help us much in the question as to whether we shall marry or not," he said in some irritation. "I think I'll count it off on my buttons." He looked down at the right lapel of his coat. "Yes — no — yes — no —"

Mrs. Katia bent over her pretty friend, who wore a Spanish jacket trimmed with many little buttons.

"Yes — no — yes — no — yes — yes! Then it's 'yes,'" she cried, clapping her hands.

The beautiful Claire smiled: "Katia, dear, ask your husband if he does not think masculine buttons most to be believed?"

"You are malicious to-day," laughed the little dark-haired lady, and kissed her tall friend on the forehead. Then, pulling her saucy face into serious folds, she continued:

"Some day my husband will write *the* book on marriage."

Arnulf Rau sent a distrustful glance from one to the other, but as they all looked equally serious, he said: "I did think of doing so at one time, but as years go on, I am becoming convinced that I had better give it up, for decency's sake."

"For decency's sake?" asked Dr. Reithmeyer, and Claire opened her eyes in curiosity.

"Simply because the naked truth of almost any marriage is unendurably unesthetic," replied Arnulf with gloomy mien. "Much, and much of importance, too, has been written in the modern realistic novel about the psychology of marriage. And due consideration has also been given the social and economic conditions upon which marriage to-day must rest. But one man only has dared to draw away the veil from the brutalities of the bedroom, one only — Strindberg — and he has written an indescribably disgusting book."

"That must have been a particularly disgusting marriage," suggested Dr. Reithmeyer.

"Not necessarily," responded the speaker. "Question priests of the confessional, physicians, lawyers, any others who have had the opportunity of seeing behind the scenes of many a marriage, and you will turn in horror from the pictures unrolled before you. And I assert that these are not the exceptions. Almost every apparently harmonious marriage hides somewhere the worm in its blossom; the nerves of even the most soulless Philistine cannot endure what is sometimes forced upon them in the intimacy of the four walls. It costs considerable money at the very least, if nothing else, to avoid the coarse realities of the married state; large and numerous apartments,

and the possibility of taking the next best express train. Believe me, the saddest tragedies of marriage spring from causes that would be infinitely ridiculous, were they not so infinitely tragic. I once loved a marvelous woman. She had just been divorced when she crossed my path. She had met her husband in the way usual with girls of good family. He was a man of intelligence, high up in his profession, stately in appearance, and very well off. She was an innocent, inexperienced young thing, who looked up to him with respect and admiration, and he was as if intoxicated by her beauty. But in the bridal night he so frightened and horrified her that she never recovered from it. She hated him, she hated even her children, she came near to insanity, and yet he loved her all the more, as she let him see her growing hatred. There was no other woman in the world for him. She could weep in pity for the pangs she made him endure, and yet she hated him all the more because he drew her pity. She demanded a divorce, but he would not give her up. She accused herself of infidelity, she threatened him with disgrace; then at last he let her go. She gave up her children, she would not take a cent of money from him, but earned a scanty living by copying and translating. She hid herself from

him, but from time to time he would discover her whereabouts, and come to her whining for forgiveness and love. She clung to me to find shelter from him, she loved me with a devotion which was spurred by the fire of her hatred for her husband. I saw him one night, through a crack in the closed curtain of her room, standing in the street and gazing up at the house like a madman. There you have the intimate tragedy of a marriage, which, seen from the outside, must have seemed to everyone a most happy one,— and there are millions and millions like it."

A long pause followed, then Claire sat up, and looked the handsome Arnulf full in the face, as she said: "What did you do with the husband?"

"I? With the husband?" he asked surprised. "Ah, yes. Chance brought us together later. He was really a remarkable and withal a most charming man. He made an invention of immense importance, and won a fortune by it. I could not detect one unpleasant quality in him. He did take some magnesia occasionally, but took it with a tiny golden spoon from a golden box. The man was quite satisfactory from an esthetic point of view."

"And what did you do with the wife?"

"Ah — hm! She soon began to bore me by her mania for indulging in indiscreet revelations of past troubles. Then the most remarkable part of it all came to pass."

"Aha!" exclaimed Dr. Reithmeyer. "I wager she married her husband a second time."

"No, she married an English Major with a wooden leg and shaky hands, and went to Canada with him."

"Fie!" said Claire audibly.

The handsome Arnulf shrugged his shoulders. "Que voulez vous, madame, c'est la vie?" And he stood up to take a little exercise.

When his back was turned Claire de Fries grasped little Mrs. Katia's hand. She did not look at her, but pressed her hand hard in warm womanly sympathy.

The bell rang, and Dr. Reithmeyer rose to open the door. It was Martha Haider, who ran in to see Claire about a proposed excursion. Dr. Reithmeyer asked her to come in, and she was evidently unpleasantly surprised to find the Raus there. She was asked to stay, but said she could not do so, as her young friend Baron Raoul de Kerkhove was waiting downstairs with their wheels.

"Aha!" teased Dr. Reithmeyer, with threatening forefinger.

Martha laughed embarrassed, and answered: "Nonsense, little Raoul is so nice and so harmless."

A general wish to have little Raoul brought up was expressed, and to end the matter, Dr. Reithmeyer ran down himself to the street door. Claire noticed that Arnulf Rau stroked his hair and beard nervously, with a quick glance in the mirror hanging between the windows. And she smiled gently to herself, glad of the interruption that put an end to the painful discussion on marriage. She took Martha by the arm and walked out onto the roof with her, while the Raus remained silent and alone in the room.

The explanation of little Raoul was as follows: After he had spent an evening alone with Hildegard in the Blumensälen, without making any greater headway in her favor than the strictest propriety permitted, the comedy began to tire Box. She apostrophised herself with wholesome candor, and gave up the attempt to utilize this young man as the victim of her experiment. He took the revelation of her profession with surprise, but without any evidences of grief, and then she invited him to call. Here he met Martha,

and from that moment on had eyes only for the beautiful girl. He followed her everywhere and was delighted when she allowed him to do errands for her. He brought flowers every day, bought tickets for theater or concert, took Schampus out to walk, and accompanied Martha on her bicycle rides. Box was a little angered at first at this sudden switching off of her interesting conquest. But after twenty-four hours her anger evaporated, and she was glad that her sister should have something to make her forget her unfortunate adoration for Arnulf Rau. The young man seemed to act beneficially on Martha's mental condition. His respectful admiration flattered her, without exciting her in the least. She would vent her moods on him, and then make him happy again with her innocent coquetry. It was a game that amused her very much and she saw no harm in it, for the young man was only twenty-four, and about to take a journey around the world. Martha did not see Arnulf Rau during this period, not as much because of her sister's harsh methods of discouragement, as in obedience to Claire's sensible advice. She had her thoughts and feelings back again in their accustomed order, and managed to be quite fairly comfortable in this transition stage from a disappointment to a

new hope, a condition by no means new to her. Now came the unexpected meeting with the man she had given up only under compulsion, and terror of the ordeal clutched at her throat and reddened her cheeks to her ears. She was glad to have her harmless escort brought up as reinforcements, and she determined to make Raoul supremely happy, in revenge for the discomfort the handsome Arnulf had cost her. It cost so little to make Raoul very happy.

The young Baron came in, was introduced, and delivered himself of the usual phrases of excuse for his intrusion. He was supplied with drinks, and the conversation began slowly to move onward again. As politeness demanded, the guest was made the subject of the first remarks, with questions as to his When and Why and Where, and inquiries as to his studies and plans. He contented himself with the same interesting revelations he had made to win Hildegard Haider's sympathy, and the fair Martha was proud of the impression her escort seemed to make, even in such intellectual company. She ventured a secret side glance at Arnulf Rau, for she was curious to know what the Great One would say to the young stranger with the pimples. And it was with considerable anxiety that she noticed a swell-

ing about her oracle's throat, something that always happened when the potentiality of criticism within him demanded expression.

And the handsome man was already opening his mouth. Fixing his stern glance on the young Baron's yellow shoes, he began: "I believe to have understood from your remarks that you are preparing yourself to join in the conflict against absolutism." And as Raoul de Kerkhove looked at him, uncertain as to whether he ought to say just simply "yes," the other continued: "I am no spy, Baron, you can speak openly in our little circle. All we who count ourselves as belonging to the scattered community of the 'Free Ones' work together toward the revolution, for the overthrow of all that is rotten, obsolete and unworthy. But we shall not do it by an attack with dagger and dynamite on the isolated rulers of the Kingdom of Darkness, as do your Nihilists; we disarm them all at one stroke, simply by removing our own persons from their sphere of influence."

"That is just what I am doing," said the young Baron, "by deserting my poor country for a long time. But I do it only because I feel that I have so much to learn before I can really serve the cause of my nation."

"Ah, you would *serve?*" cried Arnulf, in irony. "We desire to rule, Baron."

"I don't know that I quite understand," murmured Raoul hesitatingly.

Arnulf Rau smiled a satisfied smile, as if he would say: "I can believe that," then he emptied his glass in one draught, and cleared his throat as if preparing for a lengthy harangue.

"The revolutionaries of yesterday were liberators of the herd," he began, "and our social-democrats of to-day are the fruition of those of yesterday. To my taste there is nothing so hideous as the Sovereign Mob, and I count everyone of the Mob who runs with the herd. Our entire development points more and more to a disgusting equalization. Religion, state and moral laws, and most of all the schools, all work toward the sinking of the individual in the mass. Differences of class no longer have importance, for the classes make herds among themselves, distinguished one from the other only by the particular brand burnt into their skin. What else can result from a conflict of the various herds among themselves, than that the largest herd conquers the smaller ones? And the largest herd is naturally merely the union of the stupidest and the coarsest elements. It is easy to picture what

would then happen, when all else is absorbed in this greatest herd. Culture becomes systematized to caricature, and instead of the handful of rulers by birth of to-day, a legion of the Uncalled will press to the places of power, and give the world the ridiculous spectacle of a battle in the sheep flock. The born leaders, however, the pathfinders and the guides, the Free and the Unusual, they will be kept down, even more than now, by coward fear and malicious envy. True freedom will be crushed out in bloody oppression, that the broad stream of mediocrity be not held up in its lazy flow. This is the noble goal toward which the powers of to-day are laboring with their churches, schools, armies and law codes. Now do you believe, Baron, that we few truly free and independent spirits should join in the foolishness? Are you willing to crush out your capacity of individuality that no drunken peasant may ever be punished with the knout, or no stupid lump of muscular humanity have to clean cesspools longer than three hours a day?"

Raoul thought it over a few moments, then he answered with a modest blush, but not without a delicate irony: "I have not gone that far in Nietzsche yet."

Dr. Reithmeyer laughed, and his fair friend

smiled cordially at the young man, for the answer pleased her.

But Arnulf continued with a patronizing expression: "Well then, let me give you a piece of advice, my dear Baron. Enjoy Nietzsche as a poet; for practical purposes you will find him almost useless. He is a tuning fork which strikes the a, but leaves you to find the other tones by yourself."

"And may I ask, doctor, what line of study you practice?" asked Raoul.

"What study? I — that is — but first of all, let me tell you that I am not a doctor. It would have cost me a certain measure of sacrifice of personal freedom to take a state examination. And to gain the doctor diploma I should have been obliged to take part in studies which I consider unnecessary, or at least inferior. Therefore, why waste time to win a title which is of value only in the eyes of the herd and of the authorities? Pardon me, dear friend,"— he turned to Dr. Reithmeyer,—"this is not intended as a slur on your title. I feel assured that the scientific labor through which you have won it gave you true pleasure, and then you need the state for your support. You will not think me petty?"

Dr. Reithmeyer made a gesture of remon-

strance, and Arnulf Rau turned again to the Baron. "You ask what line of study I practice. Well, then — I *observe* and I *despise*. This may seem little to you, but it may yet be of importance, when you consider that through the result of my observing, in spoken and written word, others are excited also to despise — to despise all Philistinism, all authority become absurd, all narrow-heartedness, all thoughtless custom. Such scorn becomes a freedom of the spirit, and the more scorners I make, the more free ones do I make. And these free ones can easily find the courage and the power to withdraw from the laws of the herd. The rulers of the herd have no power over us; we ourselves are rulers, in that each stands alone for himself. If we wished it, each could himself find a herd over which he could rule, for the mass looks up ever in awe to him who can stand alone."

"Then you would still have rulers and subjects?" asked the baron.

"Naturally. It is the law of nature; those who devour and those who are devoured. But at present it is the Unfree who rule, and the few strong intellects there may be among them pretend unfreedom, because they fear to give the herd a dangerous example. In the future the

Free will be the Rulers, and they will scorn to talk to the herd of freedom. They will say to it honestly and openly, 'Ye are slaves, and must obey,' and believe me, they will be happy in obeying."

"Do you really think so?" asked Raoul, sadly.

"Most certainly. I am convinced that even now the truly Free Man would exercise an immense power, but he must be born to a throne. He would be a king who laughed at fear, who had the courage to be the most dangerous atheist in his own kingdom; and to whom it would be a heavenly pleasure to laugh in the faces of his parliament, his ministers, his bishops and his generals."

Dr. Reithmeyer nodded contentedly: "'*The laughing king,*' a delicious catchword. What do you think of it, Claire?"

"I?" asked the beautiful woman, going to her friend, and leaning gently on his shoulder. "I should certainly fall in love with him."

"So should I," cried Katia in merry conviction.

But Martha queried with a soft raise of her eyes: "Would you not like to be that king?"

"I do not know whether it would be worth the

trouble," replied Arnulf Rau, with a slight shrug. And then, having ascertained that the others were not looking, he threw the adoring girl a fiery glance.

Little Raoul was evidently oppressed by the overwhelming assurance of the blond giant, yet he ventured a shy suggestion: "But then we would have absolutism again."

"Of course," said Arnulf, laughing, "the absolutism of the mind. Do you know a higher ideal?"

The young man was silent in embarrassment.

"And what will be the position of woman in your ideal kingdom?" asked Claire de Fries with a sly smile. "Do you believe the absolute mind can exist in the absolute Cock?"

"Woman will rule by beauty more than ever," he replied, kissing her hand gallantly. "But ladies, let me end this question once for all; I know of but one reason for the emancipation of woman, and that is to educate mothers for free sons. At present woman is one of the hindering powers, because she is the keeper of blind belief and weak prejudice, and because it is still her hope to cut the wings of her gifted sons, for fear they should come to harm in their flight. We need free mothers for free sons. Therefore, you

have me on your side when you fight for the freeing of your intellect. But I am your bitter opponent when you attempt the crushing out of your sex."

"Bravo, my dear fellow!" cried Dr. Reithmeyer. "Just my opinion. There is nothing I dislike so much as this dreadful Third Sex."

"The Third Sex," smiled the handsome Arnulf. "You caught that expression from me."

"No, pardon me, I read it somewhere else."

Arnulf shrugged his shoulders. "Ah, yes, they always seem to anticipate one somehow. Well, I can endure it. The Third Sex interests me as little as it interests any true man. Thank Fortune, none of our charming friends here present belong to it." He bowed to Claire and Martha and nodded lightly to his wife. Then he approached Katia and asked her to lend him her scarf, as he desired to breathe a little fresh air, and feared a cold, having talked himself warm. The handsome Arnulf knew quite well that he would be discussed as soon as his back was turned, and this was the tactful cause of his departure. For he wished to give these shaken spirits and excited minds the opportunity for a free appreciation of his personality.

And that was exactly what did happen. Raoul

de Kerkhove had read much, and as a Russian student he had heard many flaming harangues by fiery young spirits in secret convention. But this calm and well-rounded argumentation of a mature man was something quite new, and the ideas struck him as daring and original. He questioned Dr. Reithmeyer about the imposing gentleman. Dr. Reithmeyer made some excuse to take the young man into another room, as he did not like to discuss Katia's husband in her presence.

The three ladies remained alone, and while Claire and Katia continued the discussion on the Woman Question, Martha sat dreaming with wide eyes and quiet smile, without giving much heed to the conversation. What a great man he was, and how he dwarfed all the others! That was all she could think of.

Arnulf Rau appeared in the open balcony door, and called: "Miss Haider, won't you come here a moment? I want you to help me enjoy the quaint charm of this courtyard milieu."

Martha rose obedient as a child, and joined her adored one on the roof. Claire noticed the bitter smile on Mrs. Katia's lips as her eyes followed the pretty girl. She drew the faded little woman down beside her on the divan, laid her

arm in sisterly pressure about her, and said: "Why do you endure it so calmly, Katia dear?"

"Calmly?"

"If it angers you, why do you not revolt against it? and it *must* anger you. Even if I were not jealous, I should rebel against the vulgarity of a man relating his amorous adventures in the presence of his wife."

"I know them all, he conceals nothing from me. In this respect he is candor itself," replied the little wife, with poorly assumed calmness.

"And you endure it?"

"I have learned to listen with purely psychological interest."

"Honestly?"

"Well, Claire dear, one does one's best. He feels himself so great and so objective in this regard and he takes it as a matter of course that in the seven years of our marriage I should have risen to his point of view. If I did not keep this belief alive in him, there might really be danger of losing him."

"And you think there is no danger now?"

Katia smiled, this time in true assurance. "No, the danger does not exist at present. He always returns to me from his little excursions into forbidden territory. He is, fortunately,

much too lazy to follow up any affair to a point where it might become unpleasantly exciting. You can't imagine how glad I am of this laziness. And then besides, each time he brings his damaged heart and lays it at my feet, he is so sweet and so really concerned to win my favor, that I can only laugh at him a little as punishment, and that soon heals his pangs of conscience."

"And how long does such a return of marital feeling last?" asked Claire in curiosity.

"Oh, until the next time," laughed Katia, recklessly.

A little pause followed, and from the roof they heard Arnulf's fine voice softened to a whisper.

Claire nodded in that direction and queried softly: "And this affair? does it not alarm you?"

Katia shrugged her shoulders lightly.

Claire continued eagerly: "But he has completely turned the girl's head, and she is of an age to cling to any hope. She will not be shaken off so easily. You can see yourself that she is over ears in love with him."

"Ah, don't let's talk about it," begged Katia as if in pain. "He'll come back. He knows well enough that he will never find another

woman who understands him so well, and with whom it is so easy to live, as with me."

"You must love him very deeply."

"Why not? I have no children, no one else near to my heart. I am faded, and never did expect to play any great part in the world. I have nothing but my open eyes and my good common sense ——"

"But you must see how she ——"

"Please don't! I know he has his little vanities, and poses, and that he does not do what he might do. I know all that, but I know better than any of you what he really is. He has a wonderfully broad mind, he brings so many things into the realm of his contemplation and his sympathy, that the concentration on one field, and the mild triumphs of mediocre work would never satisfy him. He feels and desires the highest only, why should he not be proud of that? He does not need the applause of the mass, and he gives so much to me! I have such a rich beautiful mental life through his help — no, indeed, I may well be content."

The beautiful Claire sat for a moment in thought, then she suddenly grasped Katia's hand and pressed a hasty kiss on it. "You are truly a clever woman," she said, "and an artist in liv-

ing. But I do not believe that any woman without your talent and your cleverness should marry."

"If you love him, then you need not fear to marry him," whispered Katia in the ear of her beautiful friend. "You can see how he suffers from your refusal, and he is so good! If you really love him you cannot endure to see him suffer."

While the two women thus exchanged their whispered confidences, Arnulf Rau stood outside on the roof, his wife's scarf about his throat and Martha's fever-hot hand in both his own. From a restaurant in the neighborhood could be heard the songs of a male quartette. They were fresh voices, and sounded softened and well harmonized in the distance and the evening quiet. The reflection of the electric street lamps brightened the dark sky above the peaceful city, and the stars gleamed pale as travel-worn coins, or like hackneyed lyrics, the easy melody of which can still work its effect if it fall on the right mood in the human heart. And Martha Haider's heart was as soft as porous clay after long rain; every seed must come to ripeness there, be it nettle or fiery gladiolus. She dared not draw her hand away, and her ears drank his whispering greedily.

"Does this marvelous harmony of sensation give you also such voluptuous pleasure?" he breathed. "What silly talk we hear of things poetic and unpoetic! You feel as I do, Miss Martha, I know it. Loving comprehension can dissolve even apparent discord in pure harmony. Can you now, in this moment, feel any difference between the poetry of a mountain lake in the sunset glow, with tinkling cow bells and the smell of the meadows, . . . and this back-yard view with narrow courts, tiny gardens, roofs, telephone wires and pale stars? The singers down there may be very ordinary fellows, but do they not send their song as direct to our hearts as does the love-sick nightingale? See that window over there, with the cobbler bent over his work-table under his light-ball, does he spoil the effect for you? I should miss the cobbler were he not just where he is. And see, down in the garden there, the cook and her lover,— can you see her white apron gleam in the shadow? She has both arms about his neck and believes all he is saying to her. No, do not turn away, love is beautiful in whatever shape, except ——"

He broke off, for he felt it were better not to become too explicit. Then they were silent for some while. The tenor of the quartette rang out

with a high b; a dog in the courtyard seemed to take it as a personal offense and howled aloud. And then it grew suddenly still, very still. The softened city noises murmured like distant surf on the shores of the great quiet. And down in the black garden shadows the Chevauxleger kissed the cook — or he might have been a heavy cavalryman, his saber rattled as he drew the girl to his breast.

Then Arnulf Rau suddenly threw his arms around Martha, pressed her wildly to him, and whispered hotly in her ear: "Kiss me, girl, kiss me!"

She pressed both little fists against his breast and pushed him back violently. Her eyes flamed, her lips trembled, but the words would not come. She ran hastily to the door, paused there, laid one hand on her heart and fought for breath. Then she stroked smoothingly over her hair, and entered the room.

"We have been laughing so," she said. "There's a dog out there, that howls whenever the tenor strikes a high note."

Dr. Reithmeyer and Raoul de Kerkhove had just joined the two ladies again, and a few seconds later Arnulf Rau came in. He coughed and held his wife's scarf close around his throat.

Martha took a hasty leave, saying that she must hurry home, or Box would be alarmed at her long stay. The young Baron thanked his hosts for their kind reception, then the two hurried away.

The other couples sat together about two hours longer, but it could hardly be said that they produced any abnormal amount of intellectuality.

It was slightly past midnight when Mr. and Mrs. Arnulf Rau made their way homeward. He took such long steps that the little woman on his arm had to trot almost to keep up with him, and when they had nearly reached their own house, she asked breathlessly: "Well, you bad man, have you quite turned the dark Madonna's head? What were you whispering about out there?"

"Oh, don't mention that woman again," growled Arnulf. "She is a silly little goose, a counting-machine without a trace of poetry! Let her stay behind her desk, and not imagine she is fit for the society of higher organized intellects."

And at the bottom of the last flight Mrs. Katia giggled gently up at her giant: "Well, who's the best, after all?"

And he answered as merrily: "Suffering from swelled head again, you heap of vanity? There, there, you are my only one! Now you

know it!" He pressed three hearty kisses on the longing lips, raised the slight form in his arms and carried her up the stairs.

Claire de Fries was tired when the last guests had gone and went to bed at once. Dr. Reithmeyer wished to read a little, and remained in the living room. Claire left the bedroom door open to enjoy the fresh air from the balcony windows. About half an hour later, he heard his name called. He went in and sat down on the edge of her bed. She took his hand and stroked it, and then said slowly and deliberately: "I have thought the matter over, dear, and will do as you wish."

"You will? Oh, Claire, my darling, mine at last before all the world!" he rejoiced.

"Yes," she said, "it is really only because your handsome Arnulf made me so angry with his vulgarities about marriage. Just to spite him, I'd like to show him that we can live a true marriage, even in the conventional form." And he drew her hastily to him, covering her face with kisses, and stammering blissfully: "Ah, my darling, my own one! Don't be so awfully clever! just love me, dearest, understand! just love me!"

CHAPTER V

THE hot sun of a shining September day brooded over the art city Munich, and the Old Pinakothek was full of strangers, who, Baedeker in hand, were endeavoring to live up to their education. But the sultriness in the wide halls was too oppressive even for eager tourists who usually rush through museums on the double-quick. They wandered about with deliberation, like people who have plenty of time and perhaps even a little interest for the glories of the past. It was more comfortable here than outside in the heat of the sun, and it was possible to take a little rest occasionally, on a soft bench in front of a picture marked with one or two stars in the useful red books. The stream of sightseers moved lazily along, pretty evenly divided through the main halls, and the odor of warm humanity filled the sacred chambers. The industrious copyists, about whom little circles of critical spectators were wont to gather, were conspicuous by their absence at this time of the year.

They were enjoying the charm of woods and fields under the pretext of studying from nature.

In one of the darker and therefore cooler side rooms, where old German art was housed, a solitary painter-lady was still at work. She was a dainty, pretty little person in a simple, greenish homespun skirt, and a white waist with green piping. She stood before her easel with the palette over her thumb, scratching thoughtfully through her rich ashen-blond hair with the handle of her brush, then she glanced imploringly at the honest Old Master's peacefully silly Madonna with the Child, which she was trying to copy. A sincere critic could hardly have dared to assert, with a clear conscience, that this painter-lady's work showed any remarkable talent. The shining gold background was well caught, as were the lilies in the hands of the Queen of Heaven, and the ornamentation on her robe; but the flesh tints were very uncertain, and some sad faults in the drawing of eyes, mouth and nose struck the observer at the first glance. The dainty little lady seemed to realize that all was not well. She came close up to her canvas, then stepped back again, gazing at it with her head tilted, sighed, laid her white brow in furrows, and endeavored to give the queerly swelled nose a more Madonna-

like shape by several timid brushstrokes. It was no good. She laid aside her palette, sat down with a sigh on the cane-seated bench, folded her hands on her knees, and blinked wearily at the white curtained windows. She gave a long and heartfelt yawn, then she noticed that her shoe lacing was undone and tied it afresh. The brown leather shoe and openwork silk stocking encased the daintiest little foot in the world, and this foot was as undoubtedly a perfect work of art as the Madonna's nose was an imperfect one. The pretty artist next took a little leather-covered mirror from her pocket, looked at herself carefully, and busied herself with the turn of the curls on her forehead and the set of her silk tie. Then, as she heard a firm masculine tread approaching, she let the mirror fall into her pocket again, and took up her palette knife. Although she did not turn, she was well aware that the man who had just crossed the threshold behind her was by no means so fascinated by the simple charm of the Old German Masters that it should hold him motionless for several minutes. She knew very well that his eyes were resting on the fine lines of her own figure. She scratched about on the swollen nostrils of her poor Madonna, with a graceful crook of her little finger with its

diamond ring, and bent her head now to the right, now to the left, all of which, as she knew, was very pretty to look at. Then the man behind her back took a few more steps and she ventured to peek in his direction. It was only a very young and quite harmless-looking ordinary youth with no beard and many pimples. And the painter-lady scratched away eagerly, without bothering to take any more pretty attitudes.

The youth came forward, and turned his back on her, but it was astonishing how quickly he finished with the other wall. Then he approached her easel again, stopped three steps away, and gave a gentle cough. But as the artist paid no attention, he walked on to the opposite door. On the threshold he turned again, as if to take in the general effect of the room, and as his eye fell on the pretty painter-lady, he pretended to have just discovered her, and bowed with an embarrassed smile.

The young lady looked up in surprise. Was this young man trying to make her acquaintance in such a clumsy manner, or had she really met him somewhere?

"Have I not the pleasure? — Mrs. von Robiceck, is it not?" said the young man, coming up with his hat in his hand.

"Yes, but — pardon me, sir, I can't — remember ——"

"My name is Baron Kerkhove. I had the honor of being introduced to you by Miss Haider."

"Haider." She could not remember that either. The young Baron smiled his embarrassed smile.

"The lady called herself Schneider that day. You were in Grunwald with your uncle, and we were there, too."

"Oh, yes, now I remember," cried the pretty little Mrs. von Robiceck with a slight blush, "of course, in Grunwald, it was such a beautiful day."

"Yes, indeed, a beautiful day."

And then after another embarrassed pause, the young Baron began: "I saw such pretty things of your uncle's in the Exhibition — you are his pupil?"

Mrs. von Robiceck smiled a peculiar smile. "No, I attend a ladies' art school. But it's vacation now, and I am trying to continue my studies alone. I think I am the only one of the pupils still in town."

"Oh, then you live with your uncle?" questioned Raoul de Kerkhove, somewhat foolishly.

Mrs. von Robiceck looked up as if startled, and answered hastily:

"Oh, no, I live by myself."

The young man's face began to beam cautiously, and he asked, almost in a whisper. "You are a widow?"

"No, again," replied the charming lady impatiently, "I am seeking a divorce from my husband, if you *must* know. But why do you question me so, Baron? Do you think it quite proper?" She smiled slyly.

"I beg a thousand pardons," stammered Raoul, blushing. "I am so glad to find you again after so many weeks. I could not forget that meeting, I — that is — eh ——" He stepped to her easel and gazed at her unfortunate Madonna, with the flaming blushes of his embarrassment on his cheeks.

Pretty little Mrs. von Robiceck laughed gently and happily to herself, and thoroughly enjoyed his discomfort. It was some time before she broke the silence with the question: "Do you understand anything about it?"

"About painting? Alas, no, I am quite without talent. But I understand enough to see that your copy promises to be a masterpiece."

"Oh, don't exert yourself, Baron! I see you

really don't know the first thing about it," laughed the young lady. "Here I have been killing myself over this picture for four weeks now, and I simply can't get it right. I don't see how those old gentlemen managed to paint so smooth and thin. I can't seem to do anything but daub. And the nose is rank blasphemy. I have scratched it out for the tenth time at least. It is dreadful!"

"But you do this for your pleasure merely, do you not?"

"Do you think it can be a pleasure when I have to work so hard at it? Or do you imagine it's a pleasure to stay in the hot city all summer, while the other painter girls are wandering around in the mountains?"

"Then why do you do it, Madame?"

"Because I have no money to go away, that's the simple reason. No, I do not paint for my pleasure. I expect to earn my living at it when I have gone through my little fortune, which is likely to be the case in a very short time. Copies of religious pictures seem to me to be the best pay."

"Will you give me this picture when it is done?" asked the young Baron quickly, and his gray eyes sparkled.

"What do you want with it?"

"I want to buy it. Name a good price. I will pay it, for in the next few days I expect to win a lawsuit which will bring me a million rubles."

"A million rubles?" Pretty Mrs. von Robiceck's great eyes shone admiringly on the young man. "Oh, Baron, I shall be so glad to sell you the picture. I have worked some time on it, and all that is real gold — it must have cost me at least three hundred rubles." And she laughed in charming coquetry.

"Then let us say five hundred rubles. You must earn something on it yourself, you know. Give me your hand on the bargain."

She held out her slim white hand, which he pressed tight in his own. Then he added softly: "Now I must ask for your address, that I can inquire about the progress of the picture."

She withdrew her hand hastily and answered coldly: "You can meet me here; I do not receive gentlemen in my apartment."

Raoul de Kerkhove blushed again, and stammered something about a misunderstanding.

One or two strangers wandered slowly through the room, let their eyes rest wearily on the stiff saints, martyrs, and Madonnas, honored the

pretty artist and her work with a long impertinent examination, then disappeared through the other door. After this interruption the young Baron thought he had better take his own departure. But he wanted to find the proper word of farewell first, otherwise he would have felt as if he had been thrown out, and he would not have lost the thread of this happy acquaintance at any price.

But while he was still seeking the connection, a new visitor came through the door, and walked up to Mrs. von Robiceck. This was a very tall slender man in a stylishly cut summer suit, with a head of a well-fed baby on his big body.

"Oh, Prince, so you have come to see me again?" exclaimed Mrs. von Robiceck cordially, and held out her hand to the gentleman.

The young cavalier kissed her hand, and held it a moment to his nose. "Good morning, my dear Mrs. von Robiceck! What a charming odor of industry your little hand bears! — no, no, I am not joking, I love turpentine, it is such a healthy smell!" The tall gentleman spoke in the high nasal tone which seems to be considered the proper thing in the diplomatic world.

Mrs. von Robiceck then introduced the gentle-

men. "His Highness, Prince Cloppenburg-Usingen, Baron — Baron ——"

"Raoul de Kerkhove, doctor of philosophy," supplemented the young man with a correct bow.

The Prince bowed also, and let an inquiring glance meet Mrs. von Robiceck's eye.

Her left nostril trembled a trifle, and she half shut her eye as she said: "This is a Russian Crœsus, who has just bought my masterpiece here for five hundred rubles."

"Donnerwetter!" cried the Prince merrily, but stopped himself at once with a "I beg your pardon! There you see, my dear Lilly, there are still some true lovers of art left alive. You ought to celebrate the occasion by giving your friends a nice, wholesome little punch, eh?"

"I haven't the money yet, your Highness," said Mrs. von Robiceck, with comic pathos.

"Payment follows," laughed Raoul, "as soon as the Madonna is in possession of her proper nose, and I have won my lawsuit. My father died in Siberia, his estates were confiscated — your Highness will understand — but in about a week the suit will be settled."

"Well, then, we'll have the punch at my rooms in the meantime," nasaled the Prince. "I was at your place just now, to invite you for

this evening. I have asked a few nice people, all good friends,— just a small party. Bring anyone you like, Parole; beauty or wit. Don't forget the *'or'*— both at once were too much."

Mrs. von Robiceck did not answer at once. The young Baron perceived that his presence embarrassed her, and he had sufficient breeding to retire after a few polite phrases, and leave the field to the Prince, who, he saw, had prior rights. But he hung about in the next room, which was near the entrance, in the hope of another glimpse of the charming little lady, when she should have finished her day's work. His vigil was not long, for in about ten minutes pretty little Mrs. von Robiceck left the Pinakothek in company with Prince Cloppenburg-Usingen. Raoul de Kerkhove followed the couple at a discreet distance, and saw the Prince bid farewell to the little artist at the corner of the Barer and Theresienstrasse, where the lady mounted a car of the Ring line. Raoul took the nearest cab and ordered the driver to follow the street car. At the station the young lady changed to a car of the electric line, and the cab horse had troubles of his own in the attempt not to lose sight of the game. Fortunately the young Baron had good eyes, and so, in spite of a dis-

tance of a good hundred paces, he could see that Mrs. von Robiceck got out at the Lindwurmstrasse and turned in to the Beethovenstrasse. He stopped his wagon as soon as he saw the lady disappear in the doorway of No. 10, and entered the house himself after a few moments. He did not have to mount any stairs, for on the ground floor door he found the visiting card, "Lilly von Robiceck," beside the porcelain name-plate of the widow of a postoffice official. He wrote the address in his note-book, and turned away satisfied. In the courtyard he met an old lady of confidence-awakening appearance, and inquired of her whether there were any furnished rooms to be had in the house. She gave him several names, but said that as far as she knew, all rooms were taken except one in the apartment of the widow Huber on the ground floor. He thanked her and left the house. The street windows of the ground floor apartment were wide open, but the curtains were drawn on the inside. Without meaning any harm, Raoul stood a moment under the corner window and listened. It would have made him happy to have heard any sound that recalled the presence of the charming one, such as the fall of her little shoes on the floor, or the

pouring of water in the basin — or anything like that.

And he did hear something! A man's voice, deep and pleasant, whispered inarticulate hot tendernesses; and *her* sweet voice, recognizable in its characteristic change from gentle complaint to droll high twittering, gave answer. "Oho!"— thought the Baron, and bit his lips. "She does not receive gentlemen in her apartment! Oh,— you ——" He thrust out the words almost audibly, then a truck rumbled past and he could hear no more. He called up his cab and drove away.

The man whose voice the listener had heard was none other than Franz Xaver Pirngruber, Mrs. von Robiceck's amiable bicycle-uncle. And if Raoul de Kerkhove had been able to look in at a crack of the curtain, he would certainly have turned green with envy. For Mr. Franz Xaver Pirngruber, the much-admired master of the humoristic brush, sat on the sofa, held Lilly von Robiceck tight on his lap, and showered kisses on her sweet face, while he whispered in breathless delight:

"Oh, my sweetest, my precious! you don't know how I love you — you are much too stupid

to understand it. Oh, you — you, you let me wait for three whole days, and didn't spend even one and a half pfennigs for a stamp to send me a greeting. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, lazy little beast? Didn't you promise to write me when I was to come?"

"But I didn't want you to come at all, sir," laughed the little lady, trying in vain to free herself. "You know our agreement, but you don't keep it. You are much too violent."

"I am sorry, my angel, but I can't help it. That's my idea of love." And again he pressed the little figure to him, and held his mouth to her soft lips.

"Let me go," groaned Mrs. von Robiceck, "I don't want to." Her arms were strong, and she pushed them against his breast with such violence that he had to relinquish his hold. Then she came out from behind the table, smoothed the folds of her dress and her disordered hair. "You horrid man," she pouted. "Huh, the idea of making one so hot! in this weather! Why did you come, Mr. Pirngruber, when I did not invite you?"

"Why, what's this?" he asked saddened. "Lilly mousie, what's spoiled your temper, and made you so cross?"

"Oh, nothing! it's only — oh, it's horrid anyhow! I wish I were so ugly that all the people I met had to turn away in disgust."

"Why, Lilly! Come, tell me the trouble." He rose from the sofa, stepped to her side and laid his arm gently around her shoulder. She stood pulling nervously at her delicate handkerchief, and pouted, without looking up at him: "I was planning to get dressed, take a nice slow dinner, and then to walk about a little with my new sunshade, the one the Prince gave me — and then to take a nice nap — to throw off everything and sleep two long hours — that's the best thing I know,— and then, toward evening, when it's cooler, then we could ride out to the woods, and have supper ——"

"But we can do all that! Why so scratchy, sweetheart?"

"I am not your sweetheart," she exclaimed impatiently, turning away from him. "I don't want to be anybody's sweetheart! What sort of an affair is this, anyhow? You can't show yourself with me anywhere, because everyone knows you, and we have to play some silly comedy when we do meet anyone. But you come here whenever you like, and lie in wait for me, and attack me with caresses, and when you have

kissed me enough, away you go again and leave me here in my miserable loneliness. What good does a love like that do me? Am I nothing but an object to be kissed, something you can take out of its drawer when it suits you, and then shut it in again? Doesn't that rob me of all self-respect?"

"Why, why! what does all this mean? Don't you love me any more, Lilly?" His good-natured blue eyes looked sadly into hers as he stretched out his hands. She laid both arms around his neck and said in her gentle, complaining tones: "Don't be angry, dearest — I do love you — you are the best of them all, I know — you don't think badly of me, but ——"

"But?" he asked, as she did not finish the sentence. He sat down in the nearest chair and drew her on his knees. "Come, Lilly, tell me what you want. You know we have agreed that neither shall interfere with the other's freedom — would you rather have someone you could marry?"

"For Heaven's sake, don't talk to me of marriage."

"Well, then? You know I have a good wife, whom I love and honor deeply, and you mustn't

ask foolishness of me. I saw you and lost myself, and I am drawn to you as the moth is drawn to the flame. And because you are so clever and not merely pretty, you promised that you would shine for me, but not burn me. In gratitude I will pour of my oil on your lamp; you shall be part of my mental life, you poor lonely little one, and my humor shall brighten your wick for you, if your own lack of joy dulls it. That is all. Our love is to gild an episode of our life for us, according to the principle, 'Adorn thy Home.' Adorn every corner of thy soul, say I, that thou mayst feel at home within thyself. I believe every artist needs that, and you are an artist, too, my dainty little Lilly — not with the brush, you know, but — well, in general — in your power of sensation. You have wrought a masterpiece, and that is yourself, and all I want to do is to keep you from spoiling it. I want to educate you to an artistic enjoyment of yourself."

She fell on his neck and kissed him silently, and when he raised her head a few minutes later to gaze into her eyes, he saw that they were full of tears.

"What is it, dear?" he asked gently.

"I don't know, but I am so ashamed," she replied. Then she straightened herself up,

rubbed her handkerchief over her eyes and gazed thoughtfully into space. She stroked his curly blond hair gently, and began to speak:

"Ah, dear God, if I had only been born a man. What might I not have done! But now, my whole life is a living disgrace. I am nothing but the *Female,* and whenever I show myself the male creatures run after me like the dogs on the street. I am *alluring* in the lowest and vilest meaning of the word. When one is very young and does not know the man-animal, then it is fun — it makes one coquettish — couldn't be otherwise. And then the men think they are delighting us, when they dance about us like idiots. I know perfectly well, I might be the silliest goose, or the most degraded creature, they would act just the same. Oh, I get so angry about it sometimes, that I would like to tear my face to pieces, or to throw vitriol over it. Can there be a greater disgrace than to be looked on merely as the female animal? Yes, if I were reckless or light-minded, all vanity and sensuality, then at least I might see some fun in passing from one hand to another. But I assure you, I don't need any man. I could live in a convent and not feel any lack. If I had any belief, I would enter a convent at once."

"Poor little girl, I am really sorry for you," he said gravely, without looking at her.

"There you have it!" she cried with a harsh laugh, her delicate features tortured in an angry grimace. "Pity! That is the most I can expect from the very best of you. And what will you have for me, pray, when I am old and ugly? Nothing but scorn! The human being in me, whom you have never cared to know, will be all the more an object of your contempt, when the Woman no longer attracts you. 'She's had a lively past,' you'll say, and you'll laugh behind my back when you see me painted and fussed-up like one who cannot grow old in honor, because you have robbed her of her youth."

Franz Xaver Pirngruber did not reply, and sat tenderly patting her arm. He was thinking, and she waited patiently until he had arrived at a conclusion. She looked at him questioningly, and he spoke: "Lilly, dear, I believe you should marry again, as soon as you are free of your first husband."

"Much obliged. Good advice that," she laughed, getting up from his knees. She lit a cigarette and threw herself on the sofa.

"Do you know, my dear, what my lot in marriage, in any marriage, will be? Only an

amorous fool will take me, and he'll be cruelly disappointed because I cannot give him what he expects from my face and my coquetry. And then he'll treat me brutally and torment me with jealousy. That's how it was with the first, and that's how it would be with every one. No, dearest, you must think out something else for me."

"Then there's no help for it; you must try to make an independent existence for yourself."

"And how? With my brush?"

"Oh, Lord, no!" he cried, almost in alarm. "Hold on, I have a splendid idea. You have another talent of far greater importance, and if you do not balk at using it, you will win the respect of the world for yourself, and also, perhaps, inner peace, and contentment. Shall I tell you what it is? But you mustn't be angry with me."

"No, no, I won't; tell me."

He took a letter from the table, found a pencil in his pocket, and wrote on the unused page: "Lilly von Robiceck, *modes et robes.*" He held the sheet across the table to her, and said: "That is your salvation."

She read it and laughed.

"Hm," she said thoughtfully, "that wouldn't be so bad,— I'll think it over. But please go

now, dear. I must get dressed, or I won't get a decent thing to eat in my restaurant."

He rose and took his hat and gloves from a chair by the door.

"Well, if I must, I must, I suppose," he said with a comic sigh. "Don't you want a maid? I'd so like to help you."

"No indeed, my dear, never again!"

"But it was so sweet," he whispered, bending down to reach her ear. "Well, if you don't want to, I won't plague you. What are you going to do to-night? Shall we have supper somewhere?"

"Sorry," she answered, blushing a little, "I have another engagement for to-night — but wait — that's an idea! The Prince asked me to bring somebody — come with me, do! That would be lovely!" and she sprang to her feet, clapping her hands in delight.

"What Prince?" he asked, with a frown. "Oh, you mean your Cloppenburg-Usingen?"

"Of course, he's the only Prince I know. He is charming; you really ought to know him."

"My dear child, that is impossible; I am a little too — too grown-up for that. If the Prince wants me, he must come for me himself."

"Oh, don't be stupid!" she laughed. "Why are you so formal all at once?"

He took her hands, played with them, and replied in gentle gravity. "Dear child, it is necessary to think of the rules of good form occasionally, even for the freest of us. He who despises all form, gives every *cochon* the right to call him brother."

"But the Prince isn't a *cochon,*" she pouted.

"I did not mean to infer that," he laughed. "But I don't fit into his circle. I know that he considers me among the old-fashioned artists, the artistically dead in his opinion. He patronizes only the very youngest and the very craziest. Well, I don't begrudge him his pleasure, but I do begrudge him you."

"You don't think . . . ? Oh, fie, that's nasty of you." She shook herself free angrily, stepped to her wardrobe and opened its doors wide.

"Oh, well, I know," he said, "the Prince has the reputation of being insensible to feminine charms. Who else will be there?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Haven't an idea. The Prince invites only the very nicest people — young artists, diplomats, officers in

careful selection, and such like. Shall I put this on?"

She unhooked one of the wooden forms, over which hung a dainty white batiste gown with a flowered silk waist.

"That's very pretty," he answered indifferently, and continued with more emphasis. "And the ladies? What sort of women go to the Prince's house?"

"Oh, very nice ones," answered Lilly absently, shaking out the delicate skirt and holding it up to the light. "Ladies of the Court theater, and the beautiful Rosie Unger ——"

"Count Rimsky's latest?"

"Do you know her?"

"Well rather. She owes her career to my colleague Piglheim; he painted her often enough, in great style."

"A model? I didn't know that. I don't care much for her, anyway." She took the gown over her arm, and started for the bedroom door. With her hand on the knob she turned, and nodded carelessly to her tall friend. "Then we won't see each other again to-day? I wish I knew who to take with me."

He stepped quickly to her side, and tried to

take her hand. "Lilly, I want to talk seriously with you."

"But I don't," she answered, slipped through the door and bolted it on the other side.

Franz Xaver Pirngruber stood there, snapped his fingers angrily and gnawed his lower lip, but he did not take his departure. He meditated for a few moments, then the open wardrobe attracted his attention. He stepped up to it and drew his fingers absently over the garments hanging there. The tissue paper wrapped around some of the waists rattled, he heard the rustling of silk and satin, and the delicate aroma of a perfume unknown to him floated about him. He closed his eyes and drank it in slowly, and it was as if the fragrance of her warm skin, her soft loose hair, enveloped him. He crushed his cap in his hands, then threw it violently on the table and stared again at the wardrobe. On the upper cross shelf were her hats, all carefully wrapped in tissue paper, on the floor stood her boots and shoes in an even row, and between them hung the charming gowns, all of which, as he knew, she herself had designed and carried out with the help of a seamstress, all of them showing exquisite taste and rich imagination. For Lilly von Robiceck this wardrobe had the importance that a vol-

ume of choicest novelettes would have for a poet, or a collection of rare studies for a painter. She had cast many such volumes, many such collections, to the winds, and gone eagerly at the making of new ones. She had developed this talent from her childhood, as carefully as does any ambitious artist — her heart, her very life was bound up in it. Her exquisite body, before the pure lines of which Franz Xaver Pirngruber had sunk to his knees in adoration, not daring to touch it in his awed reverence for the glory of Perfect Beauty — this body was to her nothing but a foil for the many dainty coverings upon which all her energy and her love of art were expended.

Oh, woman, woman! No sooner had Mother Eve tasted of the Tree of Knowledge than she became ashamed of her divine nakedness. She plucked a leaf from the nearest fig-tree, and giggling, with averted eyes, she handed it to her good Adam, who probably stood looking at it in dazed ignorance, long after Eve had fashioned her first fancy apron. The talent for concealment — the love of the game of hide-and-seek! This has been her thought from the beginning, and in this art she has achieved the greatest results. The core of things has no interest for her,

and the answer to the question, "Does this become me?" is all-important. Every true woman has a wardrobe full of such coverings, which are the object of her tenderest care; and a true man pays no one so grudgingly as he does his tailor, for in his heart of hearts he denies the latter's right to existence. Therefore the true man and the true woman can never entirely understand one another; therefore there can be for the man no happy medium between brutality and foolish submission, and but little choice for the woman, in her relations with the man, of anything but slavish subjection, or a malicious, obstinate war of revenge.

The woman who truly loves a man feels the burning desire to fill the shell of her personality with something that is real; and the woman whose proud self-sufficiency does not know this longing cannot love any man. But man's love grows out of his hatred for the concealing covering. It attracts him, allures him, as does every obstacle, every secret. He must know what lies behind everything, he would catch and hold the evanescent; the Strange and the New must bend before him. It is the male love-impulse that leads the hunter, the conqueror, the explorer to his goal. If women ever tired of the eternal masquerade,

then love would lose all charm for men. Natural selection would stop and the police would have to arrange for the propagation of the species. Therefore it is ordained in the scheme of creation that one half of humanity shall make itself contemptible in the eyes of the other half, to lure this other half to love.

Similar thoughts ran through Mr. Franz Xaver Pirngruber's brain as he stood, gnawing his lips and nervously clasping and unclasping his hands, before the open wardrobe where hung his love in manifold shape. Which of them loved him? For one at least really did love him, that he had felt with deep happiness. Was it this one in velvet, or the one in silk, was it the woolen one, or the gray, or the green? Disgusting! Atrocious! Must we always pay for the few sweet hours that spice the heavy dough of daily existence, by making fools of ourselves? He was too proud for that, he would go at once, and never see her again. He grabbed for his cap, then he caught up the nearest chair and dashed it on the floor with a crash, and in a cellar-deep roar he cried, "Good-by, Lilly."

A slight scream was heard in the next room, the bolt was pushed back, and charming little Mrs. von Robiceck stood on the threshold, the

white cloud of her batiste gown floating around her, while she fastened the last hooks of her bodice. "Good gracious, how you frightened me!" she remarked, with a reproachful glance. "Why are you still here, Xaverl? To what do I owe this honor?"

In two steps he was at her side, and caught her arm in hands that trembled. "I can't stand it," he cried, "I can't see you throw yourself away."

"Oh, please, sir, who's throwing themselves away?" she rebelled. "Don't crush my new waist."

But he would not loosen his hold, and growled between clenched teeth: "Don't you realize that you are taking foolish risks with your reputation?"

"Ah, this *is* sudden," she laughed bitterly. "I suppose it doesn't hurt my reputation at all to have people know me as your mistress?"

"Nonsense! that's different. I don't compromise you, I don't boast of my triumph like those young fools; I am with you only in secret."

"You are very naïve, my dear." Her smile was cruel. "Do you remember the meeting in Grunwald? That young Baron Whatshisname has already permitted himself some impertinence on the strength of it."

"I'll land him one on the ear that will ——"

"I thought you said you never compromised me?"

"Stop it, woman!" he whispered in a rage of passion, holding her closer. "I'd strangle you, if I didn't love you so absurdly. Don't go to the Prince's to-night, don't — for my sake."

She rose to the tips of her toes and caught at his hair.

"No, no, you big stupid Xaverl, if you hate it so, then I won't go. But see what you have done to my gown. I can't go out looking like this!"

"Much I care!" he cried, raising the slight figure in his arms, tossing and squeezing and kissing her, until she could scarcely breathe.

"You're just horrid," she panted. "Let me go — I — I'll be good."

"You will? You will really?" he whispered.

She crept to the door, and turned the key. Then she raised both arms to him, with a strangely sad smile and sighed: "For peace' sake, then ——"

CHAPTER VI

PRINCE CLOPPENBURG-USINGEN was the most amiable, sympathetic personality in the world. His temper appeared to be as rosy as his complexion, and his eyes shone with undimmed good-nature, like the eyes of a child just awakening from a long healthy sleep. No one had ever heard a sharp word from his lips, or witnessed any brutality of emotion on his part. His refined mind and ready wit made him a favorite guest everywhere, and his happy knack of humor helped him to endure the one sorrow of an otherwise enviable existence: the fact that he was not a great artist. He had given up the military career early in life, to devote himself entirely to his passion for the arts. His fortune was large enough to permit him to arrange his life according to his own ideas of comfort, without any exaggerated luxury, and to enable him, within moderate limits, to play the part of a Maecenas. He did not keep a stable, and cards interested him as little as did women. With the

thousands saved in this way he had gathered a notable little collection of pictures, which were divided between his city apartment and his villa on the Chiemsee. He had had a young actor educated at his expense; had sent two young painters to Paris and Italy; had opened a dress-making establishment for his valet's forsaken sweetheart; had subscribed to all monuments for men of brains, and had lent money to his many good friends in cheerful assurance that he would never see it again. So it must be acknowledged that in spite of his youth he had already done much that was useful. And in consideration of this, it could be forgiven him that the verses he had printed at his own expense showed nothing more than a certain purity of feeling; that his manuscript compositions proved only that he had studied carefully; and also, and finally, that his own paintings were never completed.

On the particular day of which we are writing, Prince Cloppenburg-Usingen was to celebrate his thirtieth birthday. His full-cheeked baby face, with the tiny blond mustache on the curved upper lip, made him look scarce two-and-twenty, whereas the assurance of his carriage and opinions might have put him down for fifty. The Prince was nervous and irritated, although a care-

less observer might not have been aware of it. He had wished to celebrate his thirtieth birthday in worthy style, and for this reason alone had left his Chiemsee villa and come into town. But he had been unfortunate with his invitations. Most of his friends of both sexes were in the country, and as the weather happened to be particularly good, none of them would venture the trip into town just for this little fête. So at the very last moment he had bethought himself of charming little Mrs. von Robiceck, who always had some passable men hanging about her; and of Arnulf Rau, whom he really could not abide, but who made a good figure in an intellectual crowd with his easily delivered paradoxes. He had asked the great Arnulf to bring friends if he wished to. Besides these necessity invitations, the only acceptance was that of Count Rimsky, with his spouse of the season, Rosie Ungerer.

The first to come was the great Arnulf Rau, and who should he bring with him but Baron Dr. Raoul de Kerkhove, whom Lilly that very morning had described to the Prince as a horrid little bore. The two men sat talking to the Prince for nearly an hour, filling his drawing-room with the smoke of his most expensive cigars and cigarettes, and admiring his antique furniture and

modern objets d'art, but no one else arrived. The Prince's cook was in despair, and had twice sent the valet Luigi, a clever Italian who spoke three languages and cherished a tender affection for his master's wine cellar, to say that supper was spoiling and that she still did not know how many places were to be laid.

T-r-r-r-r! at last the electric bell buzzed, and Luigi flew to the door. The talk stopped, and the three gentlemen gazed toward the entrance in anxious expectation. Count Rimsky, lieutenant of heavy cavalry, appeared on the threshold, wiping his heated brow with his handkerchief.

"You are alone?" cried the Prince.

"Yes. I am very sorry, but——" He interrupted himself, bowing in military fashion to the two strangers. The Prince murmured the introductions, and then Count Rimsky drew him into the ante-room with a stammered excuse, leading him by the arm as far as the window.

"What is the matter? Why didn't you bring your Rosie?" whispered the Prince.

"The devil take that confounded woman!" answered the Count in the same low tone. "She's just been making a scene because I declared that I can buy her no more new gowns this summer. She's getting to be atrociously

exacting since she's discovered that I have come to the end of my tether. The rats are leaving the sinking ship."

"What does that mean? more difficulties?"

"Don't ask such silly questions, Cloppenburg. You know my affairs. The Colonel came out with it to-day — c'est fini, I must ask for my leave."

"Really?"

"My papa has written to the Prince Regent — I am requested from High Quarters to ask to be kicked out."

"Poor fellow, and what then?"

The Count shrugged his shoulders: *"'N'sais pas,*— wine agent, life insurance, or painter. *C'est tout egal."*

"Hm! Can I do anything for you?"

"Not unless you insist on ruining yourself. It's a matter of some sixty thousand. I have spoken to a lawyer already; we'll make a contract with my creditors, by which I promise to live to be eighty and pay off my debts from my income. Fine idea, eh? Ah, bah — *il faut prendre la chose en philosophe.* Congratulate you, by the way, many happy returns."

"Thanks — you remember it?"

"Of course; didn't we have a jolly time here

this day last year? Who's that in there now?"

The Prince smiled a little dolefully and whispered in his ear.

"The blond with the swelled-head expression is 'One Who is Enough in Himself.' He looks to me like a man sitting for his monument. *Le Petit à l'aire melancolique* says he is a nephew of Prince Krapotkin, and plays the Nihilist."

"The devil! that's interesting," laughed Rimsky, in his accustomed tone of merry mockery. "Any ladies coming?"

"Yes, little Robiceck promised to be here."

"Lilly? Charming! I breathe again." The young Count hooked his arm through that of the Prince, and led him into the drawing-room again, just as Luigi ran up anxiously to his master, and confided to him in gesticulating Italian, that the cook declared she would leave the house if the supper was not served *subito, subito.*

"Va bene," decided the Prince with a shrug, *"fa venire la zupa. E quando vengone le signore,— eh! c'e la sua colpa se fanno espettarsi."*

Luigi skipped away, and the two men returned to the drawing-room. A few seconds later the folding doors to the dining-room were thrown open, and the company took their places at the table. Two of the original eight seats had been

removed, and the center places at each side of the small table were left free in expectation of Mrs. von Robiceck and a possible friend.

A tasteful bronze electrolier, with a dozen lights softened pleasantly by their colored glass globes, shed its mild light over the quiet elegance of the table fittings. Heavy old silver, china discreetly decorated, beautiful old glasses, and a single ornament, a Venetian vase with flowers, gave the whole an appearance of refined taste. A bunch of unusually large and glowing poppies filled the vase, and deep red roses and carnations were strewn thickly over the shining damask cloth. The dining-room was not large, and besides the necessary tables and chairs it contained no furniture except a charmingly fantastic sideboard, composed by Hans von Berlepsch, and two antique chests. The only decoration on the walls was a large tapestry piece by Hermann Obrist, a fantastic tree of golden blossoms on a gray-brown silk background, which hung between the windows, and on the opposite wall a large Moonrise on the Moor, by the Worpswede Master, Otto Modersohn.

The soup was eaten in silence, but with little reverence. All four men still felt the unpleasant effects of the long term of waiting, and the right

sort of joviality would not come. The conversation moved slowly, grating on its forced phrases like a badly oiled wheel. While waiting for the hors d'œuvre, the Prince poured out the *vino santo,* and remarked that he never enjoyed this noble vintage except in the presence of ladies.

"I find," he continued, "that a nearer acquaintance with the other sex is not conducive to philosophic thought, nor to the free development of the artist's soul; but as table decoration I cannot dispense with pretty women. If one eats just to fill up, then women are in the way. But when one sits at table for esthetic enjoyment they are a necessity — am I not right, gentlemen?"

"Undoubtedly," answered Count Rimsky for the guests. "They are indispensable, if for no other reason than because we men, when alone at any gathering, invariably fall into heavy drinking and *cochonerie.*"

Arnulf Rau let his white fingers play with his bread, and threw out the following sentence:

"I wonder if the New Women will be able to escape drinking and *cochonerie* in their convivial gatherings?"

"What do you mean by New Women?" asked the heavy cavalryman.

"Well, the Third Sex, that is coming into being."

And as the Count demanded more explicit definition, the handsome Arnulf delivered himself of the following explanation: "With the term 'Third Sex,' I classify all those female existences that through natural inclination, or by pressure of circumstances, have come to feel themselves no longer mere sex individualities, but simply human beings. There have always been many women who have had to deny themselves the fulfilling of their natural destiny, and who yet have felt no regret, because of their lack of any strong development either of sensual emotion or of maternal instinct. In former days, however, these natural Neuters have been obliged to adapt themselves to the scheme of feminine existence, as law and morality forbade them any part in the physical or mental occupations which were considered man's sole property. They floated through life like gray moths, and on their tombstone was written only that they had been somebody's Aunt. The development of economic conditions into a state of brutal capitalism has had for effect an enormous increasing of the army of the aunts by battalions, voluntary or conscript. Men are seldom able to marry nowadays in the years when

nature brings the sexes together, and the families of the proletariat, which make out ninety-three per cent. of our population, cannot support drones. Therefore the millions of women who have no chance to marry must find their salvation in their own work. The majority never lose the longing for marriage, and remain women. They consider themselves oppressed slaves of necessity, and do not know how to appreciate their own freedom. But there is a minority, steadily increasing, which has learned to find contentment and satisfaction in work, and these are the recruits of the Third Sex. The present-day emancipation of woman has for its object the Revolt of the Aunts. They are made discontented, they are inoculated with the virus of culture, and whipped by the lash of ambition into a competition with man in all possible fields. The Third Sex is to be the proof of the mental equality of man and woman."

"Do you believe in this equality?" asked Count Rimsky.

"Of course not," smiled Arnulf Rau. "The ladies themselves give the strongest proof against it. As a capacity for the competition is shown mainly by those who have first rid themselves of their sex qualities, it is clear the second sex, of itself, cannot compete with the first."

"Bravo! I can see that," exclaimed the Count eagerly. "My experience has taught me that women are divided by nature into two groups, the pretty ones and the ugly ones. The pretty ones have a right to Love, to the power we give them through gallantry, and — well, to all the good things of life generally. The ugly ones must be content with work and piety. Therefore, I am for the preservation of religion and capitalism."

The others rewarded these brilliant remarks with hearty laughter, in which the Lieutenant himself joined with the utmost good-nature.

Then Raoul de Kerkhove ventured the timid assertion that nowadays there were a considerable number of pretty women among the amazons of the Third Sex.

"Well, and don't you think that is horrid, simply *dégoutant?*" nasaled the Count.

"Pardon me, but *dégoutant* is perhaps too strong an expression," answered Raoul, "although I confess it is sad. But we would be too severe in our egotism if we were to treat these ladies with contempt. I must confess I suffer with them."

"My young friend is still battling with Egotism," said Arnulf Rau with a patronizing smile.

"When he is a little older he will learn to honor selfishness as the great motor impulse."

"Then you are no Socialist, thank goodness!" cried the Count, touching glasses with Arnulf.

"No, not in the least," answered the latter. "For if, because of the immaturity of the age, socialism *should* become a fact, it will serve only to hasten the development of the Bee State, and that appears to me to be the worst misfortune that could occur to humanity. For it would fatally delay the coming of the Super-Man."

"The Bee State?" The Prince repeated the words with an approving nod. "Workers, drones and queens — hm — horrible prospect! Although one could look on the production of a third sex against the will of nature as a triumph of the human mind. The Bee State would fit well in a world where mankind, instead of eating, took its nourishment in the form of pills, and where there was no love, but only the driving of the females in herds to the breeding business."

During the last words Luigi entered with a plate of lobster and caviar. The gentlemen helped themselves and ate with the look of martyrs conscious of taking part in the last festival of the old two-sex world.

The sharp rattle of the door-bell broke the si-

lence, and as one man the company looked up from their plates and gazed in expectation toward the hall.

"Thank goodness, here come the ladies," whispered the cavalry lieutenant with a sigh of relief. Arnulf Rau took the liberty of asking who was expected.

"Charming little Mrs. von Robiceck," answered the Prince. "She promised to bring some friend with her, and as she has excellent taste, I feel sure she will do us credit."

"Mrs. von Robiceck?" cried Raoul, and could not hide his joyful blushes.

"You know the lady?" Arnulf Rau turned to his neighbor.

And the Prince said: "I am surprised *you* do not know her. She is at present the most perfect thing of her kind that the walls of Munich enclose."

"And this kind is?" queried the handsome man.

"Third Sex, tragically complicated by beauty and feminine vanity."

"Mrs. von Robiceck Third Sex? Impossible!" cried Raoul de Kerkhove in youthful enthusiasm. "Why, I saw her in conditions that only the second sex can ever get into."

Sudden laughter warned the young Baron that he had innocently made a rather shady joke. He stammered a blushing excuse and was about to explain himself more clearly, when the Prince whispered a sharp " Discretion ! " across the table.

At this moment the door was thrown open, and Luigi ushered in Mrs. von Robiceck and two young men. The four men at the table sprang up, and rushed to meet the long-expected one. Her two followers were scarcely noticed at first in the general joy at the presence of the Eternal Feminine. The Prince and the Count seized her two hands and gallantly kissed her long white gloves, and not until she had had her scolding for her late coming, and heard the compliments for her charming costume — silk muslin embroidered in flowers over olive silk, with wide sleeves, slightly open neck, and pink sash — did she find a chance to introduce the two young men.

" Mr. Werner Rudolfi, Mr. Joachim von Lossow, both painters. You see, my dear Prince, I have taken advantage of your kind invitation. Now, gentlemen, it is up to you to do me credit."

She gave each of the young men a little pat with her fan, and then let the Prince lead her to her place between Count Rimsky and Arnulf Rau.

The men introduced themselves to each other,

and took their seats as soon as another place had been laid. Their host gave no sign that he would have preferred ladies in their stead, and the appearance of the two young artists was in their favor. They wore well-cut coats of the newest style, and immense black ties that left only a hair-breadth of their high collars visible. Mr. Rudolfi was very blond, and endeavored to give his peaceful amiable face a more energetic expression by means of a mustache waxed upward à la William the Second. Mr. von Lossow, a slender Mecklenburger, brunette and smooth-shaven except for a suspicion of side-whiskers, had a soft nervous mouth, an unfortunate nose, and deep-set passionate eyes.

"Am I really the only lady?" asked Lilly von Robiceck, in assumed alarm. "How stupid! Please don't let me disturb you, gentlemen, pretend I was not here, or else I shall feel I am in the way. If I had known that, I should have put on trousers."

"Wouldn't have helped you, Madame," said Count Rimsky. "One cannot disguise oneself, when one is as charming as you are."

"Oh, dearie me! is that beginning again?" cried Lilly, with a drolly unhappy upward glance. "I warn you, Count, one single flattery, and I take

my two young men under my arm and leave the place. You must know that I am an independent woman. I have earned five hundred rubles by the work of my own hands! Ask Baron de Kerkhove. It is true that I have not yet received the five hundred rubles, but the mere prospect has emancipated me. Please allow yourselves to be much impressed!"

"*Voila, messieurs!*" cried the Prince, "there is the illustration to our conversation of a few minutes past."

"If that is renewed, then *I* leave the place in protest," nasaled Count Rimsky, stopping a moment in his occupation of preparing a lobster claw for Mrs. von Robiceck.

"What were you talking about?" asked the young lady.

"No, no, don't tell her!" cried the Count eagerly.

"Then I must assume you were saying naughty things about me," was Lilly von Robiceck's opinion.

There was an eager protest against such accusation, which naturally increased Mrs. von Robiceck's curiosity until the Prince was compelled to rehearse the main points of the argument. Lilly listened attentively, then turned to the Count.

"And so, sir, you wanted to shut me out from such an intellectual conversation, did you? I am to amuse you, but I must not make you think! No, indeed, that don't go, and I shan't say anything more to you anyhow, for I, too, am a revolted aunt!" She took her wine glass and touched with Arnulf Rau. "Prosit, my dear sir, that was very cleverly put."

"Don't you belong to our association?" the handsome Arnulf inquired after a few moments, during which he had not touched his lobster but had occupied himself by devouring his pretty neighbor with admiring glances.

"What sort of an association is it?"

"The celebrated Society for the Evolution of the Feminine Psyche. I say *our* association, for my wife is an ardent member. I have often lectured to the ladies myself. They meet once a week at Eckel's to exchange mental impressions. Very interesting discussions often follow the lecture. The ladies do practical work as well, in the influencing of public opinion, through the giving of legal advice, and in obtaining the better sort of positions for educated women and girls. Miss Echdeler, a most sympathetic personality, is our president, and among the other prominent members are Dr. Babette Girel, Baroness Grot-

zinger, Mrs. von Stummer, Miss Hildegard Haider, and others equally well known. You must certainly know the one or the other of the ladies."

"No, I don't know them — that is, I have probably heard the names," answered Lilly. "The fact is, I know scarcely any ladies, any real ladies, I mean. I am afraid of them, I think; anyway, I am always so embarrassed when with them. It's funny, I really hate men, they are so often silly, and yet I can be happy only with them. When I am with other women I feel they are regarding me with distrust; they all seem to retreat behind a sort of fence when they see me. A young woman who is fighting for her divorce, who is alone in the world, and whom men call pretty, is considered an object of suspicion by all ladies belonging to good society."

"That is unfortunately very true," remarked the Prince.

"Isn't it?" she turned to him eagerly. "Just imagine, I have never had a real woman friend, at least one whose friendship lasted longer than until some man appeared. He invariably looked at me first, and then my dear friend would turn from me offended. It is the women who force us to take up with you, gentlemen, and yet I really

do hate you — I hate you bitterly." She turned suddenly ghastly pale, leaned back in her chair, and her lips trembled convulsively. The men looked at each other helplessly. The Prince arose, stepped behind her chair, touched her shoulder lightly, and whispered: "What is the matter, Lilly dear? Aren't you well?"

She started and asked for a glass of water. The Prince poured it out and she drank thirstily. Then her glance fell on the young painter sitting opposite her, and she called to him with frowning brows and in forced loudness: "Why don't you talk, Rudolfi? Say something funny." And turning to the others she continued smiling, "Mr. Rudolfi suffers from hay fever in the warm months, otherwise he's so nice, really *dear*. Rudolfichen, show how dear you can be."

"With pleasure," answered the young man with the William II mustache, and then sneezed heartily, whereupon he took out his handkerchief and blew his nose with much ceremony.

Lilly burst into a wild fit of laughter, and the other guests endeavored to join her mirth to cover up the unpleasant contretemps. The Prince had seen the strange seizures that attacked Lilly von Robiceck occasionally, and he knew from experience that it was best to leave her to herself as

much as possible. He began a conversation with Mr. von Lossow, in which Rudolfi with the hay fever soon joined. The simple story of their young lives was quickly told. Lossow's case was the most interesting. From his childhood the young man had had a strong inclination for the study of music, but his family protested vigorously against his wish to prepare himself professionally for the career of an orchestra leader and composer. At the age of fourteen they had even forbidden him to take piano lessons. He had gone through the High School, had studied law during two university terms, then finally his so wise parents had permitted him to follow his longing for an artistic career, on the condition that he enter the school of painting in Munich. They considered painting not quite unworthy a nobleman, as among the painters there were such names as Count Kalkreuth, Count Harrach, Baron von Kameke and Anton von Werner. While music had only Mr. von Bülow to show of noble lineage, and his moral views and political opinions were not above reproach.

"Oh, ye gods!" sighed the Prince. "Will these fossils in our class ever die out? You are much to be envied, Baron Kerkhove!"

"I? Do you really think so?" said Raoul,

somewhat embarrassed, for the Prince had caught him throwing adoring glances at charming little Mrs. von Robiceck.

"You are indeed!" replied the Prince, "for your father died in Siberia, and it is not the slavish souls that die there. And then, if one is a nephew of Prince Krapotkin!"

"Your Highness knows?"

"Why, of course, you told me yourself, I think."

Lilly von Robiceck suddenly drew attention to herself again by a little scream and the angry exclamation: "Please stop that!" which she accompanied by throwing a piece of bread at the handsome Arnulf Rau.

"Why, fairest Madame!" nasaled Count Rimsky, "*qu'est ce qu'il-y-a donc?*"

"This gentleman is endeavoring to press my foot under the table," cried Lilly, maliciously. "But I will not let myself be trampled under foot that way." Then she suddenly changed her tone to a merry twittering, and, pointing the tip of her fork at the culprit's nose, she asked him: "Who are you anyway, sir? I have forgotten your name."

"Arnulf Rau," he said, offended by her be-

havior. "I hope to give you opportunity to become better acquainted with that name."

"I hope so, too," she replied pertly. "Anyhow, I'll take you at your word. Will you have the kindness to introduce me to your association with the crazy name — what was it? Restauration de la Clique Femininist?"

"Ha, ha! Eckel ought to write that on his door," laughed the great Arnulf.

"Yes, if he wants to get rid of all his patrons," joked the Count, but Lilly answered promptly: "I allow no jokes on the subject of the higher aims of womankind in my presence, remember that, Count." And turning to Arnulf: "Then you will introduce me into this society? May I have the pleasure of calling on your wife? I will tell her that you *pressed* me to join."

The pretty bon mot was properly applauded, and the air cleared again, as Lilly seemed to have passed safely through her attack. Meanwhile the menu neared its conclusion, the roasts were taken away, and Luigi brought the ices. The champagne corks popped, and then Count Rimsky remembered the reason for the festivity, and whispered Lilly that she must make a speech. She protested, and consented only when the Count and

Arnulf Rau both promised to act as prompters. Then she touched her glass with her knife and rose.

"Honored members of the first sex, and fellow human beings! If you will permit me to take advantage of the right your amiability gives so freely to my sex, the right, namely, to say as many foolish things as possible, I will make a little speech, the first I have ever attempted."

"My virgin speech," prompted the Count behind his hand.

"No racy jokes allowed, Count!" Then she turned to Arnulf Rau and whispered: "Some brilliancy quick, please!"

The handsome man started and rubbed his head. Lilly shrugged her shoulders in pity and sighed drolly: "There you have a new proof of the difference in the sexes —

> "Women can always find something to say,
> You have to first rub the thoughts away!"

The Prince giggled, Raoul de Kerkhove exclaimed "Bravo!" enthusiastically, and Werner Rudolfi raised his champagne glass with a hoarse cry of applause.

Lilly continued: "Our honored host celebrates his thirtieth birthday to-day. Gentlemen, that is

more than many of us can do — for instance, you will have to wait a good long time before you catch *me* inviting you to celebrate my thirtieth birthday."

The Prince was so amused by this joke that he fell into a fit of coughing, whereat Werner Rudolfi held out his glass with a sympathetic "Prosit."

"Our honored friend has indeed made good use of his life. What artist does not feel his heart beat quicker to look upon a man who has been an army lieutenant and *yet* buys pictures, in spite of the fact that he paints some himself; a man who is really interested in music, although he makes some himself; a man who assists poets and would prefer not to write his own poems at all? Gentlemen, a man with such a spotless past can have only the most glorious future before him! Yes, Prince, you have a great and noble task still to do. Just think how many people there are who have not yet borrowed money of you; how many pictures there are which you have not yet bought, and how many geniuses are waiting for you to discover them. But I, Prince, as a woman of the Third Sex, I owe you especial and particular thanks; for of all the men who have sworn friendship for me you are the only one

who has never said: 'I love you.' For this reason I feel that I should be the first to say: 'Long life to our dear and revered friend, Prince Cloppenburg-Usingen.'"

The company rose, glasses touched, the Prince received congratulations, and Lilly much praise for her fine first effort. She was proud of it, and scoffed at her two prompters, who had been of so little use. Arnulf Rau drowned his irritation in much champagne, and neither threats nor blows with the fan could deter the Count from telling a number of rather equivocal stories. The eyes of the younger men shone in moist brightness; Rudolfi's because of his hay fever, the others' because of their admiration for charming little Mrs. von Robiceck.

The meal over, they went into the drawing-room and smoked, while the Prince brewed the favorite champagne punch, yclept a "cold duck," before the eyes of his guests. The conversation turned upon literature, and a long line of new names came up, each of which received an enthusiastic acknowledgment from some one of the company, while all of them were crushed down and drowned under the waves of Arnulf Rau's pitiless criticism. The Prince took from his desk a queer little volume in odd shape with a sym-

bolistic cover-drawing on gray paper, turned the leaves, and then handed it, thus opened, to Arnulf Rau.

"You have a good voice, stern critic, please read this to us."

"How can I read that — there are no punctuation marks?" said Arnulf, and then with a mocking smile at the title page, "Ah, Stefan George."

"Smile afterwards, if you want to," said the Prince gravely. "I have written this gentleman that I love him, although there is much I cannot understand; look it through, please, and then read it."

The handsome man withdrew with the book to the neighborhood of a lamp, and studied the text with creased brows. After about five minutes he announced that he was ready, and then read the following poem with good delivery and softly modulated voice:

As thou drinkest the milk of thy mother,
There watches an envious fairy
Singing of shadow and death.
She gives thee as christening gift
Strange eyes prophetic of sorrow,
Eyes where the muses are hiding.

Scorn wilt thou feel of the rough play
Pleasing thy duller comrades.
Toil that makes sordid the soul,
From thoughts austere and sublime
Shall warn thee and hinder.

When thy brothers complain and cry —
O grief! thy secret pain
Tell to the winds in the lone night
And under the rasp of thy nails
Let bleed thy childish breast.

Do not forget: Thou must kill
Thy sweet and tender youth.
Only upon its lone grave
When wet with tears — Oh, many, many
tears — shall grow
From rarely marvelous green
Rarely beautiful roses.

No one spoke, and after a moment the Prince looked a challenge at Arnulf Rau, "Well?"

"If it chance upon the proper mood," responded the latter, "it might win a sudden consoling beauty, that I acknowledge."

"I should think that were about all one could ask of any poem," smiled the Prince.

Arnulf Rau shrugged his shoulders. "If that is your Highness' opinion. *I* find little to attract me in this riddle-giving, or in this weary 'world-

melancholy.' I do not by any means believe that all art should be made for the man in the street, but art should not be sought in its difficulties alone."

The Prince glanced about in the little circle as if to ask for further opinions. Count Rimsky did not look promising, his mouth was open and he pretended to be forming smoke-rings to conceal his yawns. Werner Rudolfi gazed up at the ceiling with moist eyes, as if hypnotised by the garlands of fruit painted there, and Raoul de Kerkhove looked as if his shoes were hurting him. Mrs. von Robiceck sat on the divan and smoked, with her elbows on her knees and her head in her hands; she was dreaming open-eyed, and the convulsive twitching of mouth and nostrils which always preceded her attacks of nerves was again noticeable. Joachim von Lossow sat on another corner of the same divan, clasping and unclasping his fingers nervously, and trying to catch the end of his little mustache between his teeth. His eyes flamed with suppressed passion.

"Will you not play something for us, Mr. von Lossow?" asked the Prince.

The young man rose, stepped to the grand piano, and threw back the top without a word. Then he sat down, thought a few moments and

spoke at last, in so low a tone that not all of those present could hear him: "I will try to play that poem for you."

"Yes, yes," breathed Lilly. She threw away her cigarette, drew up her feet and stretched herself at full length on the divan, her arms crossed under her head.

Joachim von Lossow began to touch the keys softly, in floating, seeking chords. Then a melody appeared, gradually growing, a wondrously sad, monotonous melody, like a cradle song at twilight. But the melody grew and grew, it gained shape and form, became heavy and pregnant with Fate, carried on the wings of strange harmonies, until it broke off suddenly; and after a mightily swelling tremolo, came an allegro of brave defiance, in which noisy trumpets and trampling bass figures fought against a rising song of calm strength and greatness. The struggle died away, the minor melody came again, this time in richer form, singing the controlled sorrow of a noble heart, and the fantasy closed in a mystic apotheosis, full of the spirit of Lizst.

All the listeners, even the quite unmusical Raoul, were under the spell of this revelation of a marvelously gifted artist's soul, and none dared to break the charm by everyday words of praise.

The young musician turned on his chair, and bowed slightly to the Prince.

"Marvelous!" cried the latter softly. "*How* did you understand it? I thank you from my heart, Mr. von Lossow."

And he pressed the hand of the embarrassed young Mecklenburger, who rose to return to his former seat. Mrs. von Robiceck pulled up her feet to make a place for him, and he saw that her eyes shone with tears.

"You have been crying, Lilly?" he asked, breathing quickly, while his eyes gleamed in happiness.

"It was so beautiful," she said simply, and held out her hands to him.

He bent to kiss them, but Lilly was quicker than he — she clasped his finger tips firmly, drew his hands toward her mouth and kissed them both.

Lossow blushed deeply. When she released his hands he stood nervously clasping them, then stepped to one side and stared at a picture on the nearest wall.

Werner Rudolfi had witnessed the little scene and had also observed that Mrs. von Robiceck was deadly pale. He rose quickly and came to her side. "Anything the matter, Lilly? Did the music touch you so?"

She clutched at his coat and drew herself up by it painfully. "I feel so miserable," she moaned low.

"Shall I take you home?"

She shook her head. The Prince came up also, with anxious questions whether he had not better send for a carriage. She protested wildly. "Oh, no, no! leave me here. I don't want to go home. What shall I do there? the night is so long! let's be merry. Baron von Kerkhove, play the flute for us, or amuse us somehow."

Raoul drew up his shoulders and answered humbly: "I am so sorry, but I really can't play the flute."

"What can you do?"

"Nothing, I regret to say, nothing — but admire you."

Lilly laughed harshly. "Don't tell your uncle that, or he'll not let you have two kopeks' worth of dynamite. Play something more, Mr. von Lossow."

The young man sat down at the piano again, and improvised on motives from the Nibelungen Ring for about half an hour.

During the playing one or the other of the guests stood up to change his place, and here and there a low conversation was carried on. Arnulf

Rau worked himself carefully over to the divan and began to whisper flatteries to charming little Mrs. von Robiceck, with no other result than a silent but decided rebuff. The handsome man was angry. He had not been able to make himself important the whole evening, and this obstinate little woman excited him astonishingly. She was a genius, born to be a poet's love, why should not this flower bloom for him? She would be the first to withstand him in the long run. So he would not take the rebuff, and continued to whisper charming words in her little white ear. Lilly von Robiceck rose finally, and sat down at the piano immediately behind Joachim von Lossow. When he had finished playing, the talk became loud and general.

Count Rimsky took his reward for his long enforced silence by telling all manner of court and society anecdotes, falling into French when they became too racy. Lilly paid little attention, for she didn't know French. She took Mr. von Lossow's arm and led him into the dining-room, which had been put in order.

"You never played so well," she said, suddenly laying her hand on the young man's arm. "Your music comes directly from your soul — have you loved much?"

"Oh, yes," he smiled in embarrassment.

"As men love?"

"No, as stupid boys love."

"You are a darling!" She tried to laugh, but without success, and her white face drew into rigidity again, as she said suddenly: "Do you know what I would like to do now?"

"Well?"

"Shoot myself — but I am too cowardly — won't you help me?"

He shook his head and laughed as if he thought she were joking. "Nonsense, Lilly, why do you say such foolish things? You only excite yourself unnecessarily. Go into the country for a while and drink warm milk, fresh from the cow."

"Fie on you!" said Lilly, and stepped away from him to the heavily curtained window. She played nervously with a tassel, then broke out into a passionate whispering: "It is not nice of you to make fun of me. Do you know what a miserable life I lead? Well, perhaps you are right, I am not worth anything better, I have flirted with you, too. Your music drove me mad, music always affects me strangely — and now I am crazy to hear you stammer love to me, as all the others do. I am angry at you because you are

so respectable and reserved, I want you to be like all the others — just that I may enjoy the triumph, you understand. I could throw myself on your neck to-night in ecstasy, and treat you like a dog to-morrow. Wouldn't it attract you to destroy a creature like me? My beautiful eyes are worth at least one charge of powder, I should think."

He came to her side and stroked her hair: "Don't make yourself out as bad as that; it is not true at all. You are ill. Wait until you can live an ordered life again, when you have your divorce."

"Ah, don't remind me of that. To-morrow I must go to the priest and formally relinquish my Catholic belief, otherwise I cannot get the divorce. Then I am a heathen, and the devil can have his sport with me." She laughed nervously.

"Lilly, dear, don't excite yourself so. There are many who really care for you and would gladly help you. I know of one who would be so happy if you would only marry him."

"Indeed! Who?"

"Rudolfi."

"Oh, he has hay fever."

The young man was angry. "When you are like that I can't talk to you. He loves you so

honestly, and you have told him that you like him."

"Why, yes," answered Lilly. "How could I do otherwise, he is so good? He ought to go and marry a respectable girl with some money."

He stroked her hair again. "I never saw you like this before, what is the matter? Please be good again, Lilly."

She drew away from him petulantly: "Stop that rubbing, it makes me nervous."

"You *are* nervous. Get out into the country, and grow strong and well again."

"Oh, I'm strong enough," she cried and stretched out her arms. Then she stooped suddenly, caught the slender youth below the knees and raised him from the floor. "There!" she panted, and letting him drop again, ran back into the drawing-room, clapped her hands and cried: "Lilly wants to dance."

This was easier said than done, for the rooms were not large and were filled with furniture. The Prince explained the impossibility to her, and then she declared that she wished to go to the American Bar.

"Your wishes are a law unto me," said the Prince gallantly, although he did not in the least

care to go elsewhere to drink, and leave the greater part of his punch to Luigi.

So the company set out for the pretty cellar room in the Four Seasons Hotel, where the better circles of society and the art world meet in nightly rendezvous. It was already one o'clock, but little Mrs. von Robiceck did not seem to know what fatigue was. She sampled several drinks, none of which met her approval, nibbled cakes, and became more and more excited, behaving in a way that drew general attention.

The Prince was embarrassed by her conduct, so he pleaded a headache and withdrew, soon followed by Arnulf Rau, the latter angry because this good-for-nothing little woman had so studiously ignored him the entire evening. Count Rimsky joined a party at another table, where sat a good friend from whom he could hope for more affection than from this capricious little Robiceck.

Lilly remained alone with the three younger men, whom she kept there until three o'clock. Then, at last, she let herself be persuaded to give the waiters their needed rest. There were no cabs at that hour, and they had to walk the long distance to the Beethovenstrasse. She took the arms of Rudolfi and Lossow and started out at a

brisk gait, while Baron de Kerkhove trotted silently behind them. Lilly tried to induce her two young friends to play all sorts of wild pranks. She commanded them to climb up the fire escape of the Court theater, to put out the street lamps, to sing the Marseillaise, and more of the like. But they were both too well brought up to give way to her wild mood, so she finally became angry and dismissed them at the Karlsthor, of which they were heartily glad, as they both lived in the northern part of the city. She told Baron von Kerkhove that she needed no escort and was going home alone, and thereupon started off at such a gait that the little man had hard work to keep up with her. But he managed to be at her heels when she reached her own door.

She halted there, panting, dropped him a mocking courtesy and said: "Thanks for accompanying me. Now you know where I live when you want to send me the money for the picture."

Raoul de Kerkhove did not answer. He drew a key from his pocket and opened the court door, motioning her to enter.

"Thanks," she said, and walked in unsuspectingly. He followed and closed the door gently. As they stood together in the dark, Lilly screamed suddenly and asked with trembling voice:

"What does this mean? What do you want? Did I give you my key?" She felt in her pocket, drawing out the key and some wax matches. "Where did you get that key?" she stammered again, in deadly terror.

"I live here," he answered low, and she felt his breath in her face.

"That's not true! you are a scoundrel! I'll scream if you dare touch me."

"If you scream I will shoot myself before your eyes," she heard his trembling voice whisper. "Forgive me, I cannot help it, I love you madly. This afternoon when you were out I rented the room next to yours — my things were brought over this evening. Please calm yourself, I would not hurt you for the world — ah, I love you so."

Lilly finally managed to light a match in spite of the trembling of her hands. She saw the maddened man standing before her, his arms stretched out as for an embrace, a shining revolver held firmly in his right hand.

"You are mad," whispered Lilly, achieving a short laugh with difficulty. "Open the door, I'll hold the light."

He did as she ordered, took out his other key and opened the door of the apartment.

She summoned all her courage, and walked past

him into the narrow hall. But he did not even take time to close the door, fearing she would escape into her room and lock him out. When she heard his steps behind her, she halted and turned to him with an alluring glance: "Please shut the door, and put up the chain," she whispered low.

He hesitated a second, and she opened her eyes wide, something flaming up in them that forced him to obey her. He turned to the door and closed it, then wheeled again and saw her cross the threshold of her own room. In three bounds he was at her side, and before she could close the door he pushed it open with all his strength. He stood there in her room, his breath coming in quick gasps, and the beautiful young woman trembling and quivering scarce an arm's length from him.

"I cannot leave you," he stammered in mad passion, and yet did not dare to touch her. The cool night wind came in at the open window, blowing out the curtains. Her tiny candle flickered, her mouth was open, her lips quivering, and her eyes stood wide in fear.

Suddenly she blew out the light, and gave a wild spring in through the open bedroom door. He sprang after her, but could not find the knob

in the darkness, and while his hand sought it he heard the bolt snap into place. In impotent rage he pressed his shoulder to the door, and whispered: "Open the door, Lilly, open the door, I want only a word with you."

She whispered from the other side in answer: "Leave my room at once or I will alarm the house. I have my finger on the bell."

Then he gave it up, stepped back from the door, put his revolver in his pocket and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. He took out a match and lit it, looking about in the little room. He drew his hand absently over the back of a chair and across the table cover. On the table lay a large white paper on which was written in heavy letters

Lilly von Robiceck
Modes et Robes.

The penciled letters were drawn over in ink. His match went out and he lit another, holding it up to the walls, and over the desk. Here lay a portfolio, books and papers in confusion, with knickknacks and many photographs. Among these he discovered Lilly's head and bust, the neck and shoulders bared, and draped slightly with a white scarf. He took the picture from its little easel,

and pressed it to his lips. The match went out and he lit a third, then crept to the door, and felt his way cautiously to his own room with his booty.

Lilly sat the while on the edge of her bed, listening to the gentle sounds from the other room. She had good ears, and could hear plainly when he closed the door behind him and crept along the hall. Then she drew a deep breath and crossed herself. She lit the candle at her bedside, shut the window and bolted the shutters. Here at last she felt safe, and the fearful tension of her nerves, which had hung over her for many hours, broke in a fit of convulsive weeping. She lay on her knees at the bedside, burying her face in the clothes, tearing at pillows and coverlet with both hands. She did not rise until her knees began to ache, and then she undressed slowly. As she laid her watch on the table she saw that it was past five o'clock, and the dawn was creeping through the cracks of the shutters.

Just as she was stepping into bed her eyes fell on a crucifix, in ivory on black wood, which hung at the head of the bed. She took it down and kissed the cold body of the Saviour.

"In farewell," she said with a sad smile, stretching herself in bed, and putting out the candle, but still holding the crucifix in her hand. She

turned over on one side, pressing it to her breast — she wanted to go to sleep with it, like a child with her doll. The Saviour should protect her from all evil spirits this one last night, for the next day she had to go to the priest and bid farewell to the church that was built up on this symbol of world-redeeming suffering.

But before going to the priest, she called at the studio of her friend Werner Rudolfi about noon next day, and the good fellow was so shocked by her looks that he begged her to leave town and take a trip into the mountains with him. He could get rid of his hay fever there, and she should learn to renew belief, not in the teachings of the priest, but simply in the possibility of good in the human heart, and in the pure beauty of that strong impulse by which Nature renews herself from eternity to eternity.

Rudolfi went home with her, and helped her pack a little trunk. Raoul de Kerkhove did not show up that day, and Lilly von Robiceck informed her landlady decisively that she would not return until the gentleman had given up his room.

Something else occurred to her. She turned back into her room and wrote the following lines hastily on a piece of drawing paper:

"DEAR FRIEND:

"I am running away from you to-day. Do not attempt to change my decision. All must be over between us. I cannot give you what you seek in me; I would only torture and disappoint you. *I was at the Prince's party last night, after all.* Believe me, I am no good,— all your trouble is lost on me. Try to forget

"Your unhappy

"LILLY."

She threw the letter into the box herself. It was addressed to Mr. Franz Xaver Pirngruber.

CHAPTER VII

IT was nine o'clock when Baron Raoul de Kerkhove awoke the following morning. He looked tired and ill and had deep blue rings under his eyes. He arose yawning, and crept on bare feet to the door which opened from his little room into Mrs. von Robiceck's bedroom. The washstand stood in front of it and it was with some difficulty that he could bring his ear near the door, but his few moments of listening failed to detect the slightest sound from the other side. He stepped back, sighed deeply and beat his forehead with his clenched fist.

Heavens, how bad it did look now! his atrocious behavior of yesterday evening toward the sweet little lady, behavior due entirely to the effect of that confounded alcohol, which he never could stand! He was honestly ashamed of himself. Her stolen photograph lay on his table. He sat down on the sofa and stared at the picture until his eyes blurred. And again he beat his brow with his fist and murmured through his clenched teeth: "I must have been crazy!"

Then he took stock of the situation. After his brutal attack of last night it was quite out of the question that the dainty little woman would ever treat him otherwise than with the utmost contempt. And here he had settled himself alongside of her! Decency demanded that he move out at once, for she certainly would not endure this state of siege very long. But if he did move he must pay the landlady at least one month's rent, and that was quite impossible just at present. He caught up his purse, which lay on the table with his key, penknife, and all the various boxes and cases that he always carried about with him, and counted its contents. They came to exactly two marks and a few pfennigs.

Something must be done, and that at once. He sprang up, dressed with all possible haste and noiselessness, and when he had finished his modest breakfast he set out at once, glad to be able to leave the house without meeting Mrs. von Robiceck. He carried the stolen picture in his pocket.

He first made his way to the main postoffice, for all his mail came general delivery. A large letter with an official seal was handed out to him. He stopped in the court of the building to study this seal, as the postmark over the Russian stamp

was quite illegible. When he had made out the impression his face grew pale with fear, and his hands trembled. He tore the letter open hastily and read it. It was the hand of Fate. Would he be able to escape once more?

When the letter was safely hidden in his pocket, he looked about anxiously to see if he had been observed. His face was deadly white and his knees shook. With uncertain steps he dragged himself onward through the Marshallstrasse to the Palace Garden. Here he stopped to drink a glass of seltzer at the kiosk by the gate, and then entered the English Garden. He soon found a solitary bench on which he let himself fall in exhaustion, wiping the cold drops from his forehead and trying to think. Immediate flight alone could save him, but how could he flee without money? It seemed impossible for him to formulate one sensible thought. The figure of charming little Lilly von Robiceck obtruded again and again on his mental vision, with such vividness that mad longing clutched his heart in a grip of iron. He felt that he would be as little able to leave the neighborhood where this enchantress dwelt as he would be to put her out of his thoughts. His Fate would overtake him here.

He put his hand in his hip pocket and drew out a pretty red leather case, which looked as if it might contain an especially valuable meerschaum pipe head. He opened it and took out a dainty revolver with an ivory handle, all six chambers loaded. He played with the shining thing, and sank into a new train of reflection. Would it not be better to make an end of it now, before the inevitable disgrace had ruined him morally as well as in every other way? They would find him here on the lonely bench in the shadow of the plantains, undisfigured, with only the tiny red spot on one temple. His friends would identify him as young Baron Raoul de Kerkhove, who had been driven to his early death by the pangs of love, and by his sorrow for his enslaved country. As clergymen are not allowed to speak at the grave of a suicide, Arnulf Rau would probably say some deeply felt words in his praise. Lilly von Robiceck, as his housemate, would be the first to hear of his tragic end, and she would certainly say to herself that she might have prevented it, if she had not turned away the poor boy so harshly. She might possibly be at his funeral. The others would certainly come with flowers and palms, the Raus, Dr. Reithmeyer, Claire de Fries, and first of all Moritz

Haider's Daughters, all in black. Martha Haider had such a pretty black silk dress, and she would bring white roses in her hands and weep for him.

A thought shot through his brain; yes, he would try it, it might mean escape and safety. He returned the revolver to its case, and took his way to the banking house of Moritz Haider's Daughters. He halted a few steps from the office, wiped his brow, and drew a deep breath. Then he pulled himself together, entered the room, and when he had made sure that there were no customers present, he swung his hat over his head with a loud, "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

Martha and Hildegard sprang from their chairs and asked what the matter was.

"Now just guess, ladies!" he answered merrily, taking the official letter from his pocket and holding it in the air.

"Donnerwetter! Have you really won your lawsuit?" cried Miss Hildegard.

"Of course I have," he rejoiced; "this paper is worth a round million."

"Well, I declare!" laughed Hildegard, falling into her desk chair, and Martha held out her hand across the table, saying: "Well, well, our

little Raoul! I never should have thought you were worth that much. Many hearty congratulations!"

"Thanks! thanks!" He was red in the face, and pressed the paper into Martha's hand.

She unfolded it and looked at the writing. "But it's in Russian," she exclaimed in disappointment. And then she turned to the "young man" who had been watching the scene with interest: "Oh, Mr. Zirngruber, you know Russian, won't you translate this for me?" But before Zirngruber could answer, Raoul de Kerkhove had snatched the paper again. "Don't trouble the gentleman, I'll read it for you."

He looked at the paper, murmured some Russian words, and delivered himself of the following:

"ST. PETERSBURG,

"CHANCELLERIE OF THE IMPERIAL SENATE,

"You are herewith respectfully notified that through the most gracious decision of His Majesty, the Czar, of the 15th of August, old style, the judgment of the undersigned Court of Cassation has been made effective, whereby the confiscation of the estates and properties of your late father, Leo Alexejwitsch, Baron von Kerkhoven

of Usmaiken, Hasenpot, Masheiki, Shagori and Poswal, was declared invalid, and the order has been handed down that said estates and properties be returned to the rightful heirs. You are asked to present yourself before the 10th of September in St. Petersburg to sign the necessary documents. Signed

"COURT OF CASSATION OF THE IMPERIAL SENATE."

He folded the letter again, and put it in his pocket. "Now, ladies, what do you think of that?" he cried, striking an attitude.

"First rate!" said Hildegard with a hearty handshake.

"We must celebrate this propitious occasion," cried Raoul again. "Command me, what can I do for you? Shall I give you each an estate for a dowry? Miss Martha, would you like Usmaiken, or would you prefer Hasenpot? Miss Hildegard, I recommend you to take Shagori."

"We can decide on that later," cried Hildegard merrily. "I would suggest that you take us up to Schleich's to begin on."

"Why, of course, with the greatest pleasure. All right then, you are my guests for this even-

ing; and, say, the weather is so fine to-day, shut up your shop and come with me now."

Box turned to her sister: "You can go perfectly well, Martha, there isn't much doing to-day. I'll stay until the dinner hour. Go for a bicycle ride; we won't have many more such days this summer. Have you your wheel with you, Baron?"

"No, I am sorry to say. It's being repaired again."

"Good gracious! I think you got badly stung on that purchase."

"And it cost me four hundred marks!"

"Perhaps Mr. Zirngruber will lend you his."

The "young man" was delighted to be able to oblige the Russian millionaire, and the Baron assured him of his warmest thanks.

"I shall not forget your kindness, Mr. Zirngruber," he added with a patronizing wave of his hand.

The young man brought out his wheel, Miss Martha mounted hers just as she was, and the couple started off.

They rode out to Nymphenburg, and when they reached the Grunwald Castle Inn, Martha sprang down and demanded a halt for refreshments. The sunshine and the shaking up on the

bad roads had made her hungry and thirsty. They sat down merrily and ate a light lunch with enjoyment. Miss Martha was in the best of spirits, and bubbled over with jokes and droll coquetry. Raoul looked at her and sighed gently. She was really a *very* pretty girl, her profile was as pure and fine as that on an antique cameo, and her smoothly parted hair gave her something of a Madonna look. She had womanly charm and girlish freshness and sprightliness, but she was just a little red in the face and looked heated. Strange! He could not imagine Lilly von Robiceck red and heated. The very, very lovely ladies, for whom one kills oneself, they never perspire, he thought, and he felt that he could not shoot himself for Martha Haider. If ladies set their ambition on having men shoot themselves for their sake, they must not tease them all the time.

When hunger and thirst were satisfied, Raoul de Kerkhove put his hand in his pocket to pay the bill, but before he could draw out his purse, Martha interrupted him and said, gravely:

"No, Raoul, I won't allow that — you must not pay for me — particularly not now. That is just my pride."

"Don't be alarmed," laughed the young

Baron in embarrassment. "I perceive I have left my purse at home, the first time it ever happened. Here I sit with my millions, and without a cent."

"Then permit me to put you down on our books for twenty marks."

In pretended affectation, she took a gold piece from her pretty little snake-skin purse, and dropped it into his hands.

"Many thanks," the young man blushingly answered. "Rothschild began by lending money to men of position. Who knows, this double crown may mean for your firm the start of a fortune like his!"

"What should I do with so much money," laughed Miss Martha. "Do you think money is all we need to make us happy, you young plutocrat you?"

"Oh, no, I know well, 'happy alone is the soul that can love,' as the poet sings."

Miss Martha sprang to her feet, rolled her eyes drolly, and cried in good Saxon dialect: "Oh, do stop, you give me a pain!"

Baron de Kerkhove paid the little bill, and then they rode on to Nymphenburg castle. By that time they had had enough, for it was very warm. They left their wheels at the gate, en-

tered the park and sat down on a shady bench with a view of the swan lake and the Greek temple.

"Oh, this heat!" sighed the fair Martha, who found a particular pleasure in talking Saxon today. It was one of her little accomplishments.

Raoul said nothing, and let his watery blue eyes rest on the unmoved surface of the little lake. The sunshine sparkled over it, and through the reeds on the far side two young swans were making their open-mouthed way.

"What are you gaping at, Raoul?" His pretty neighbor aroused him from his brown study.

He was offended by her fun and answered sadly. "Can't you ever be serious, Miss Martha? Have you no ear for Life's mournful elegy, which is everywhere to be heard, even in the midst of the full harmonies of beauty and joy?"

"Ah, now, ain't that beautifully said!" continued Martha the incorrigible.

"You do not understand me," sighed Raoul, and turned away hurt. "You only want to play with my feelings. Does that give you so much pleasure? Oh, I can play, too, but I play with other things."

He took the red leather case from his pocket, and revealed the dainty weapon. He let the barrel sparkle before her eyes, until she shrank back frightened to the farthest corner of the bench. Then he laughed like a child amused at her alarm, and said: "I play with this every day, Miss Martha, and I imagine how it would be to take it up in deadly earnest some time. These things go off so easily. And I know of nothing worse than the feeling that one is superfluous. I feel so often, nowadays, that I am not equal to all the great things I have set myself to do. I feel that everyone else will be as little inclined as you are to take me seriously, and that knowledge robs me of all wish to live."

"How can you talk like that at your age, and when you have just inherited a million," replied Martha in her usual manner of speaking. "With your money you can find enough to do, and the world takes millions seriously enough."

"I do not want to be judged by my money, but by my personal worth!" cried Raoul gloomily. "What sort of a life would that be? If I cannot feel sure that I can be loved for myself, then I don't want the millions."

"Put up that thing, Raoul, and don't talk so foolishly," said Martha, taking the revolver

from his hand and closing it in its case. "You are still so young, you certainly have no occasion to look despairingly on life or on the chance of love."

"Really? Do you really think so? Oh, tell me, Miss Martha ——" He caught her hand and gazed into her eyes without completing the sentence. Try as she might, she could not help laughing at his tragic face, with the pimple right on the tip of the nose.

He turned away sighing, and stared out over the shimmering lake again. They sat silent for a long time, the spell of the noonday's hot brooding fell numbing on their limbs and thoughts, they dreamed with open eyes. Raoul de Kerkhove had a vision. From out the depths of the lake came a great white water-lily. Its chalice opened slowly and in it, softly bedded, lay a tender rosy body, a fine and dainty elf. The two young swans swam up, and harnessed themselves to the blossoms with chains made of golden sunbeams. They drew it slowly through the gleaming water, and as it neared the shore, the fairy boat grew larger and larger and the little elf in it grew and grew, too, and became a wondrously beautiful woman with rich ash-blond hair and great violet eyes. And when the swans were

very near the bank, Raoul saw that it was Lilly von Robiceck. The blood rushed to his heart, his hands grew cold. Deep red darkness lay over his eyes, and he stretched out his arms in overpowering longing.

"What's the matter, Baron?" asked the pretty girl at his side, startled from her comfortable dreaming by his queer actions.

He suddenly threw his outstretched arms about her body, pressed her to his breast and kissed her vehemently on the neck and under the ear.

She screamed, but there was no one near to hear. She struggled with him, panting angrily, and finally freed herself with a violent jerk.

She stood before him trembling with rage. "What do you mean? You must be crazy——"

He fell back wearily on the bench, took off his hat and fanned himself sadly, saying, in a voice of extreme fatigue: "Indeed? Well, it may be possible. Sweet Martha, have pity on me, I love you."

Miss Martha's black eyes shot contempt down at him. "That is impertinence, not love." She turned her back on him, and hurried with long hasty steps through the shadowy forest paths. He sprang from his seat and caught up with her. However much she hurried, he re-

mained at her side, talking softly but earnestly:

"Please listen to me, Miss Martha. Why are you so angry? What have I done? If you call that impertinence, then I am sorry. But that's the way love always begins."

"What do you know about it?" she exclaimed impatiently. "Leave me, I don't want to see you again."

"Oh, you think I don't know what love is?" he cried offended. "If you only knew, you would not make fun of me. I know love, believe me, in all its phases, except the legitimate, of course."

"Be quiet! you are indecent. I don't want to hear you."

"And I want to ask you if you will follow me to Livonia and share my honors and my money?"

She halted involuntarily, and looked at him with wide eyes. He seized the opportunity to catch at her hand, but she tore it away. "Let me go. I forbid you to follow me. I am going home alone."

"Oh, and you will tell your sister that I offered you my hand?"

"No, I shan't tell her, I am so ashamed of myself." The tears came suddenly to her eyes,

and while wiping them away she hurried on all the quicker, stammering in her excitement, "I don't know what I have done to deserve this. I have never given you cause to treat me like this."

"Why, you certainly have! Didn't you tease me incessantly? I am no boy. Will you take me seriously now?"

"I don't want to see you again — let me go."

"Listen to me, Miss Martha; I will tell you something. Love will never come to you, for you run away from it, and make grimaces at it from a distance like a scared rabbit. I pity you, Miss Martha." He stopped, raised his hat, and let her go on undisturbed.

When he reached the castle gate, he saw her riding through the avenue by the canal. He mounted Mr. Zirngruber's machine and rode onward slowly, so that the distance between them grew steadily greater until he lost sight of her altogether in the Nymphenburgstrasse. Then he considered what was to be done now. He could not return to his old apartment of three handsomely furnished rooms in the Schellingstrasse, because he had told his landlord there that he was going out of town for two weeks. The good man took no alarm at this, for he had

the new and elegant furniture as security for the rent, which was still unpaid. He did not happen to know that the furniture was only rented. Raoul did not want to return to the new room, into which he had taken only a light trunk, for fear of meeting Mrs. von Robiceck. He decided not to go there until after nightfall, which also allowed him to put off signing the paper for the police until another day. They could look for him if they wanted him.

He rode about aimlessly for almost an hour in the outskirts of the city, just to kill time and to shake off his unpleasant thoughts. At one o'clock he put up his wheel in the Restaurant Français, and ordered a good five mark dinner and a bottle of wine for the same price. Fair Martha's money should at least satisfy his hunger, even if she herself refused to satisfy his longing heart. After dinner he adjourned to the Café Luitpold, smoked an endless number of cigars, read an endless number of newspapers, and asked black-haired Pepi, who was an old friend of his, if she would take a trip to Italy with him, as he had just fallen heir to a million. She was delighted at the prospect, and he gave her three marks to buy a new pair of gloves. But even then it was only four o'clock, so he

seated himself once more on Mr. Zirngruber's wheel and rode out to Aumeister. Tired from the heat of the day and his sleepless night, he hid the machine in the bushes, threw himself on the grass and was soon fast asleep.

When he awoke it was past six o'clock, and he hurried back to the city, feeling that he hadn't a moment to lose. He rode up to the office of Moritz Haider's Daughters, just in time to return Mr. Zirngruber his wheel, and to catch Miss Hildegard closing the place. "Has Miss Martha gone home already?" Raoul asked cautiously.

"No, she didn't come back here at all," replied Box, unsuspectingly. "She didn't feel well,— she can't stand the heat,— so she stayed home to lie down."

"Oh, I am very sorry! May I accompany you?"

"Yes, if you will walk on slowly, for I must give Schampus his exercise and a swim. You'll find me at home in half an hour."

He strolled slowly to the Giselastrasse, and saw by a glance at the wheel shed in the court that Box had not yet returned. He took stock of the situation again. Had he better go up and attempt a second attack on Martha's heart?

When she realized that he was in earnest it would not be easy, he thought, for a young girl to refuse a Baron with a million rubles. But then on the other hand, what would happen if she really said "yes," and he, in his conscientiousness, should actually take her at her word? (Raoul de Kerkhove always drew his conscience into his calculations, although it had left him in the lurch more than once.) The girl was too handsome for a man of his temperament to find it possible to live a cool marriage of convenience with her, and yet she was apparently so cold-blooded that he could hardly hope for an ecstatic love happiness. So perhaps it was best to give up his serious intentions with regard to Martha Haider; besides which, it was scarcely likely that she would receive him at all now. Anyway, it was not a good idea to make a proposal of marriage with the object of asking for an immediate money loan — at least such conduct might not appear nice in the eyes of a refined person, although the ladies Haider, as business women, might be expected to be less sentimental about money matters. He had better try to achieve his purpose in a simpler manner. Walking up and down in front of the house, he thought over this problem until he saw Box come round

the corner at a sharp pace, with Schampus tearing on ahead.

The good creature, still sopping wet, sprang up on his friend Raoul in delight, leaving the marks of his broad dirty paws on the latter's elegant, new, and unpaid-for summer suit.

Box sprang down, scolded the dog, and condoled with her young friend over the mischief done. Then she put up her wheel, and all three climbed upstairs to the Haiders' apartment.

The servant was out and Miss Martha opened the door. She smiled a forced smile when she saw the young Baron, and answered her sister's sympathetic questions as to her health with a shrug, disappearing immediately into her own room.

Hildegard looked after her with a shake of the head, and said to Raoul, as she let him pass in, "Queer girl! the least little thing upsets her so. She never spoke a word to me through dinner, as if I were the cause of her headache. And when I commenced about your good luck she told me to shut up, that you were a little beast. Now, why should you be a little beast all of a sudden? Please take a seat, Baron."

"Yes, I'd like to know why myself — thanks." The young man sat down in a com-

fortable arm-chair, drew off his gloves slowly and smiled a knowing smile.

Box sat opposite him with crossed legs and asked: "Why that smile, Baron? What did you do to her?"

"Nothing that I know of," he replied cheerily. "Tell me, Miss Hildegard, do you believe that lending money always destroys friendship?"

"And why?"

"Well, Miss Martha lent me twenty marks. Perhaps that is why she calls me a little beast."

"Nonsense, Baron," laughed Box; "why do you bother yourself with such trifles in your present circumstances."

"Yes, isn't it ridiculous? Imagine it, I was not in a position to pay a bill of one mark fifty! I have been just a little reckless lately, and my next allowance will not come for two weeks yet. Now how shall I get to St. Petersburg? Could you let me have a thousand?"

"A thousand marks? It doesn't cost that much, does it?"

"No, not quite, but in Wirballen the Orient begins, and one must have bakshish in hand. And then I must make a proper appearance in

St. Petersburg as the future Marshal and heir of Usmaiken, Hasenpot, Mosheiki, Shagori and Poswol."

"Do you really get the whole bunch?"

"Not quite; I must divide with my elder sister and my younger brother, but I have the entail and the title. I hope this is enough security for you. And then I have my new and handsome furniture in the Schellingstrasse, I can make that over to you."

"Oh, that's such a bother," answered Box in a business-like manner. "You need the money right away, and it's easier for you to give me a note, say for three months — you will have your money then, will you not?"

"Certainly. My allowance comes in two weeks, as I said, and then I can get all I want in St. Petersburg, anyway."

"All right," said Box, rising and going to her desk. "But I haven't the thousand here in the house — would five hundred do? Come to the office to-morrow and I will give you a draft on the bank for the rest." She opened the drawer and took out a little money box. "Oh, dear!" she cried, "I see I have not even five hundred here — so I'll put you down for three hundred now. Does that suit you? We'll get the rest

to-morrow — you needn't take the very earliest train?"

Raoul had risen also. "Many thanks, do just as you think best. I must close up several matters here anyway, as it will probably be six months before I can return."

Box had her back to him, so she could not see his disappointed face. While she was looking for the proper paper and filling it out, he wandered about the room, looking at the many knick-knacks it contained. He discovered a case of Indian workmanship, in silver and ivory, which he had not seen before. A little key was in one of the drawers. He opened it in his curiosity, and then exclaimed in sudden surprise: "Oh, what charming legs!"

Hildegard Haider gave an involuntary look down at herself to see if her skirt was pulled up, then she turned to him. "Oh, papa's collection — didn't I ever show that to you?"

"No, please pardon my curiosity, it is most interesting."

"Please write your name here."

He stepped to the desk, and wrote his name on the note. Looking it over, he found himself set down as owing three hundred and five marks, and fifty pfennigs.

Box saw his surprise and explained: "That's business, you know. One-third per cent commission and six per cent interest for three months, recoverable by law in case of a protesting of the note. Here is the money."

The young Baron bowed in thanks and put the bills in his pocket. Then he turned again to the collection of tobacco-stoppers, and Box explained several of the choicest pieces.

"It is remarkable," he said meditatively, after a few moments, "how much our imagination has always occupied itself with women's legs. I suppose it is simply the charm of the veiled. If bicycle riding should put skirts out of fashion, then long robes would have to be invented especially for the ballet girls, and not even an old Major would think of stopping his pipe with a little leg like these."

"Very well put, and very true," laughed Box. "I believe this question of clothes has a still wider significance even. If we women could wear trousers without making ourselves conspicuous, then I could do business on the Stock Exchange myself. I don't blame the men for refusing equal rights to a sex that has so much to conceal, and does it with so much fuss. We're not even equal before God, for they won't

allow us to take off our bird's nests, or whatever other foolish contrivance we wear on our heads, when we wish to show our reverence to the Lord in His own house. We expect even God to close an eye out of politeness. And just as long as we exact politeness and chivalry, we acknowledge ourselves to be the weaker sex, therefore I, for one, snap my fingers at chivalry."

Raoul de Kerkhove played nervously with one of the finest specimens, as he remarked thoughtfully: "Tell me, it would really interest me, . . . can you, yourself, imagine Miss Hildegard Haider as a wife?"

"Oh, yes; why not?" she answered without hesitation. "Only I can't imagine what sort of a husband I should have."

Raoul began again, timidly: "I suppose you would prefer an older man, who — what shall I say ——"

"No, thanks, much obliged, but I have no interest in ruins. A condition of merry war with a bright young chap, with whom one could have a good hearty quarrel, seems to me much more amusing. You see, it is possible that I might get tired of the banking business some day. Then I could marry a decent colleague and let him run the shop; that would be the so-called sensible

marriage. But if I should marry for love,— no reason to laugh, Baron,— if I *should* marry for love, then I would find my happiness in having a husband whom I could train up in the way he should go. Men aren't so bad as we please to think them, if they only fall into the right hands, that is."

"Then you would, hm! — as it were — look for a position as governess to a single gentleman? Delicious — and very original!" And Raoul scratched thoughtfully with his nail at a little black spot on the leg he held in his hand.

"Don't scratch that," cried Box, laughing, "it won't come off; it's meant for a flea."

"Oh, dear!" cried Raoul comically, blushing like a young girl. He held out his hand to put the leg back in the box, but it fell from his fingers to the table and broke. "Oh, dear! Now I have broken your pretty leg," he cried in despair.

She scolded him good-naturedly: "You clumsy thing, you!"

"I am most unhappy, Miss Hildegard," he stammered. "Scold me some more, I have deserved it. I am just as clumsy with everything I touch in life, but I have never broken a lady's

leg before, not even her heart. If you wish it, I will shoot myself on the spot."

And he fished out his famous revolver from its case in his pocket, holding it to his temple with a fine theatrical gesture. Box didn't show much alarm. "Oh, you ridiculous thing, you make me laugh!" she exclaimed good-humoredly, taking the revolver from his hand.

"Give me back my comforter," he begged, sadly smiling. "You can't imagine how many serious talks we have had together, my shining little friend here and I. You see, it is my tender heart that is the cause of all my misfortune. My soul is not robust enough to endure the pressure of sympathy with the millions of my unhappy fellow creatures."

"Oh, don't talk nonsense!" cried Box impatiently. "Sympathy is the worst of all passions. Every young man ought to have a good portion of healthy selfishness in his make-up."

"That's just the trouble," he sighed, "I can't reach that standpoint. I am such a clinging nature, I believe I would have made a most attractive young girl. It is my misfortune to have been born a man."

"Ha, ha! it's just the opposite with me," laughed Box.

"Yes, you know I've always thought we would supplement each other remarkably well."

"That wasn't what I meant."

"But it is the truth — yes, honestly. Your heart longs for something to educate and to guide; mine needs a strong hand."

His pale eyes gleamed moistly past her into vacancy, and she pricked up her ears in expectation of what was to come next. But when several minutes had elapsed without anything occurring, she thought it better to prod him with an encouraging, "Well?"

The young Baron started slightly and recalled his roving glance. He sighed from his knees up, and then spoke.

"Ah, Miss Haider, think of my situation. I must go back to Livonia, to the home from which I fled, with a feeling of utter loneliness; I must take the management of my immense estates upon myself, and it is a task for which I am so ill-fitted! And then the Russian officials — they fairly flay one alive!"

"Marry a sensible woman, if you can't take care of yourself," said Box, giving him a friendly slap on the shoulder.

He tried bravely to beam, and answered: "That *is* the solution, Miss Haider, but where shall I find such a one? It must not be an average woman, a *woman* in the usual sense, for I myself belong to the weaker sex. And yet in all my travels I have met but one strong and really sensible woman, and that is yourself, Miss Haider. I do not know whether I dare ——"

"For mercy sake, are you really going to propose to me?" burst out Box, falling into the nearest chair with a most delighted expression of face. He pulled his chair up to her, and rubbed his knees with the flat of his hands.

"There, you see how unlucky I am," he spoke sadly. "You don't take me seriously, you only laugh at me."

"Oh, come now, don't be offended," she answered in the friendliest tone. "But it is so very sudden, I can't seem to imagine myself as Baroness and chatelaine."

"And why not? Didn't I tell you once that I liked to think of you as an Amazon on a fiery steed, with a high silk hat?"

"Hm! yes, the hat might have charms for me," she laughed. "And when I think of the sort of people that put themselves on the high horse sometimes, I know I could hold my own

with most of them, anyway. But, don't be angry, it *is* rather funny, you are so terribly young and I am thirty-three."

"That's only on the surface," he smiled mournfully. "My soul is aged, as aged as one must become when one broods on all the sorrowful problems that vex humanity."

Box did not answer; she sat in silence, thoughtfully gnawing her under lip. Her dark eyes shone, and the surprise had called up a delicate color on her white skin; she looked decidedly pretty and girlish. Suddenly a thought ran through her brain, she seized his wrist and shook him gently.

"See here, my little friend," she said, "please explain how you suddenly come to honor me with a serious proposal, after paying such energetic attentions to my sister?"

"Hm! how can I explain it," he replied softly. "At first Miss Martha seemed to be — the nearest — the most natural friend for me; but just by reason of the contrast of her youth I seemed to feel how old I really am — and yet she had only mockery for me."

"That's just her way, she doesn't mean anything by it."

"Perhaps; but this manner kills all serious

feeling in those whom her beauty attracts."

Box looked at him in sudden surprise. "I fear you have spoken a true word there; you're not so stupid anyway, Raoul. If I really knew that I was not interfering with my sister — hm ——"

"Then I may hope?" The young man rose and held out his hand.

She rose also, and raised her right hand as if to take his, then she hesitated and said: "I must think it over; don't be so impatient, you fiery youth!"

He dropped his hand and heaved a sigh that would soften a heart of stone.

She smiled into his eyes, folded her hands behind her back, and said, with amusingly clumsy coquetry: "I suppose you might give me a trial kiss — that doesn't commit us to anything, does it?"

"You are very kind," he answered blushing, laid his arm gently round her shoulder and kissed her hastily on the mouth, without any disrespectful display of ardor.

"Didn't you like it?" he joked, as she rubbed her lips with her coat sleeve.

"Not madly — to be quite frank," she laughed merrily. "But I promise you that

shan't frighten me. I don't imagine I know as much about kissing as you do, and one learns something new every day." She held out her hand and pressed his heartily.

"Shall we go to Schleich's for supper now?" he asked.

"No, we'd better give it up for to-day. Martha isn't able to go, and under the present circumstances I can't take supper with a young man alone. You see your offer has suddenly robbed me of all my independence. Yesterday I would have wandered about with you until midnight, but to-day I feel it my duty to conduct myself like a mature young girl of good family. My land, how stupid that must be! So please go now, and to-morrow you shall have your check and your answer. By-by, Baron."

He did not go at once. It was evident there was something on his mind to say yet. Finally he drew a ring from his finger, and said: "My dear Hildegard — I may call you that now, may I not? — I want so much to give you something for the broken leg. This belonged to my mother, please take it, no matter what your answer may be." And he pressed a gold circle set with a single large turquoise on her reluctant finger.

"If you really wish it, then many thanks," said Hildegard in droll embarrassment.

He took up his hat slowly, looked about the room as if to fix the picture in his mind; took a few steps and halted again near the desk, as if the farewell were too hard. Hildegard Haider stood by the table, with her back turned to him. She was honestly embarrassed, and was as red as any ordinary young girl would be, who feared, or hoped, to be caught and hugged in a minute. But Raoul was not thinking of any such disrespectful action, and instead made use of her inattention to fold up the draft which still lay on the desk, and to put it in his pocket.

She heard the rattle of the paper and turned: "What are you doing? That is your note, I must keep that."

"Indeed? Oh, I beg your pardon," he answered, looking very stupid. "I didn't know, I never signed one before." He returned the paper to its place.

"Oh, you sweet innocence!" she joked. "Look at him running away with the only security I have." Then she took him by the shoulders and marched him briskly out at the door.

When she heard the outer door fall to behind him, she ran into Martha's room, calling out,

before she had crossed the threshold: "Say, sweet flower, I've just had a proposal from Raoul!"

The fair Martha, who was sitting at her table with a book, turned pale and fell back against the sofa pillows. "*You* have?" she exclaimed in incredulous surprise.

Box came nearer, and continued in an offended tone: "Well, you needn't appear *quite* so surprised. Why shouldn't he propose to me?"

"Because he proposed to me to-day," was Martha's prompt answer.

"To you, too?" Box had to sit down. "What did you say?"

"I very naturally told him what I thought of him."

"I don't think that natural, I think it very stupid. Do you believe he really loves you?"

"He swore it anyway," replied Martha with a shrug. "He drew out his revolver and said he would shoot himself."

"That's what he did with me, too," interrupted Box, still offended, "and then ——"

"Then he became impertinent."

"How?"

"He caught hold of me, and kissed me like a crazy man."

"The wretch! He didn't do that to me."

The sisters sat opposite each other, glaring across the table with angry eyes.

"I lent him three hundred marks," growled Box.

"I got off with twenty," triumphed Martha. "And you think you understand men. Oh, dearie me!"

"And you, my dear," was Box's return thrust, "you'll never capture a man anyway. You freeze them off, your manner kills all serious feeling in those whom you attract with your pretty eyes."

"What I do with my eyes is my own affair," answered Martha, frostily. "I'm in no mood to be scolded by you, just because I don't like a certain man. Take him yourself and welcome."

They talked at each other in this strain for some little while, and when the servant came to call them to supper she found them sitting by the table with reddened faces. Miss Martha's beautiful eyes showed traces of tears.

Martha was much too excited to eat, and Hildegard eased her feelings by sending word to the cook that no one could eat such a mess. But she did manage to eat it, and when her hunger was appeased, her good temper returned and she

was disposed to look at the adventure from the funny side. Just then the door-bell rang.

"Who can it be so late?" grunted Box, looking at the clock. Their more intimate friends were all in the country, so they listened attentively to the sounds outside. The girl returned and announced that a gentleman wished to speak to the ladies alone about an important matter, official business. The sisters looked at each other, then Box decided to have the man shown in.

An elderly gentleman with a comfortable embonpoint and military carriage appeared in the doorway, bowing respectfully.

"You wished to speak to us, sir?" asked Box. "What can we do for you?"

"Are we alone, ladies?" asked the stranger, and as Box replied in the affirmative, he turned to see that the servant had shut the door behind her. Then he came a step nearer and asked softly: "Can we not go into the next room? Are you sure the girl does not listen at the door?"

Martha was alarmed: "Oh dear, what *do* you want of us?" she inquired anxiously.

The stout gentleman replied in a tone that inspired confidence in spite of its cautious lowness:

"Don't be alarmed, ladies; my name is Sedlmeyer, Police Commissioner. I come on official business from our office."

It was Box's turn to grow pale, but she pulled herself together and asked the officer to enter the drawing-room. He accepted her invitation to sit down, and then he took two cabinet photographs from his fat, well-filled portfolio, handing them to the ladies.

"If I am not mistaken," he observed politely, "these are your pictures."

They were undoubtedly pictures of Hildegard and Martha Haider, excellent likenesses of both. Box acknowledged this fact, while Martha was unable to say a word, her heart beat so at seeing her picture in the hands of the police.

"Do not alarm yourselves, ladies, I will explain this at once," continued the official, turning the leaves of his note-book. "I found these two photographs to-day in a bachelor apartment in the Schellingstrasse, where a certain Baron Raoul de Kerkhove had lived. The gentleman left town yesterday, destination unknown. These two pictures stood on his desk, and as the ladies Haider are known to the police, most favorably of course" (he bowed politely), "I supposed that you might be acquainted with this gentleman

and could give me some information about him."

And then it came out that the young Baron, who carried humanity's sorrows about on his shoulders, was being eagerly sought by the police of several Russian and German university towns, on account of a train of swindlings, protested notes and more such matters. He was not a Baron, nor was he a doctor of philosophy nor even a landed proprietor. His name was Van Kerkhoven and he was the son of a merchant of Dorpat. He had really made his entrance examinations and gone to several universities to study. Everywhere he had told the same story about his million ruble lawsuit, and had not only swindled many merchants out of their goods, but had actually persuaded the Dean of his last university to lend him six thousand marks. Here in Munich he found easy credit everywhere, because of his assertion that he was soon to marry one of the firm of Moritz Haider's Daughters. His story found ready belief as he was seen everywhere with the ladies, and had made friends in the best circles. A notice from the Russian police started inquiries in Munich, and his arrest was to follow the very next day.

These startling revelations threw Miss Martha into tears. She had been kissed by a crim-

inal! But Box took it in a more practical fashion.

"The man sat here not an hour ago, on the very chair you are sitting on now, sir. He borrowed three hundred marks of me, and left me this ring and an offer of marriage as security. Please take the ring as an asset. He will probably seek to get away as quickly as possible with the money, so I should suggest watching the railway stations. It may be possible that he is still in town."

The commissary thanked them and started off in a hurry.

"Isn't it strange," said Box a little later, "that such a well-educated, and evidently well-brought-up young man should be such a rascally swindler?"

"Didn't I suspect it?" triumphed Martha. "I lent him only twenty marks. It was you, sister dear, who decidedly overrated him."

. . . . . .

Neither Mr. van Kerkhoven, nor the twenty marks, nor the three hundred marks, were ever seen again.

CHAPTER VIII

SEVERAL weeks had elapsed. The thousands of North German tourists who poured through Munich on their way to the Alps had now poured back again to their flatlands, paying the customary toll of many glasses of Hofbräu beer. The city took on its stranger-free appearance once more, which however had little effect on its classical dirtiness in rainy weather. Normal performances at normal prices could again be seen in the Court Theater. But few went to see them, for October seemed to have set itself the task of making good the sins of the capricious summer. The lecture rooms of the various higher institutions of learning showed yawning emptiness, although the new term had officially begun. And of all the interesting people whom the conscientious scribe of these chronicles has had the honor to introduce to the gentle reader, only Moritz Haider's energetic daughters, who could not leave their business, and Dr. Reithmeyer, were in town.

Since the world of science demanded a new and irrefutable proof of his ability to practice a professorship of Germanics, Dr. Reithmeyer had spent the summer months writing an epoch-making work on Councillor von Goethe's "Meyer of Westphalia." It will be remembered that His Excellency, on Sunday, February the 15th, 1824, remarked to Eckermann that Mr. Meyer of Westphalia was a very promising young man and had written poems that aroused expectation. He was only eighteen years old, and remarkably clever. To find the scientific data of this Meyer of Westphalia was indeed a task worthy of much noble sweat.

Dr. Josef Reithmeyer had succeeded in getting a list of all male Meyers of the better class born in Westphalia in 1806, and in discovering that of these, twenty-seven had written poems. He had furthermore succeeded in collecting one hundred and thirty-nine poems which had been written by these twenty-seven Meyers, and had printed them in his highly interesting book. In the second, the critical, part of his work, he had endeavored to judge these poems from the point of view of Goethe's taste and opinions in 1824, in the hope of thus discovering the true Meyer of Westphalia. This method of reasoning had led him

to the conclusion that it was surely Mr. Karl Leberecht Gottwald Gneomar Meyer from Haspe. Unfortunately there were no data of the later life of the poet to be found, except the facts that he had studied in Bonn, and had been carried off by delirium tremens in his ninth term. Dr. Josef Reithmeyer made the clever assertion that just this last fact was the clearest proof of the identity of Karl Leberecht Gneomar Meyer with the talented Meyer of Westphalia; for he had evidently never been able to recover from the intoxication into which the praise of the great man would naturally throw a youth of eighteen. The regular professor of his branch in the Munich University, to whom the young licentiate had shown the advance sheets of his work, congratulated him most heartily on his performance, and promised his whole influence for the winning of the desired professorship.

And now that our good Dr. Josef Reithmeyer had thus laid the corner stone of his career, there was nothing more to prevent him from carrying out the desire of his heart, the wish to be joined in marriage to his beautiful friend, Claire de Fries. She had been visiting her parents in Friesland while he was collecting information in Westphalia, and had now returned to Zürich.

The wedding was to have taken place in Munich before the winter term commenced. But there were unexpected delays in securing the necessary papers, and in the printing of the great book "Goethe's Meyer of Westphalia" as well, so that they finally decided to be married in Zürich towards the close of October. Claire de Fries had insisted that the marriage must not interrupt her studies, and Dr. Reithmeyer had agreed to this condition with a sigh, but with the secret hope that she might think otherwise after the wedding. It wasn't in the least necessary that she should earn her own living by the practice of medicine. She had money enough to live on very comfortably, and he also had an income that would have sufficed him even as licentiate. If they put their revenues together they could live most agreeably with no care for the future. For, as aforesaid, "Meyer of Westphalia" made the professorship certain, and his author had a right to expect other epoch-making works of himself, which would bring him not only new academic honors, but also the means to permit himself a progeny.

It was strange that just these two should have come together: Claire de Fries, with her persistent zeal for science in spite of her otherwise

phlegmatic disposition, and Josef Reithmeyer, who otherwise than in his love, was a real little Philistine. Without any display of passion on her part, her statuesque beauty had quite disheveled his usually correct thinking and feeling. In these disordered moments he had written poems which were better than those of the celebrated Meyer of Westphalia; and these poems had so worked on the sober North German common-sense mind of the Zürich student, that she had unhesitatingly given herself to the passionate writer, with no inner struggle, just from a warm sense of duty. She was far from imagining him to be the fulfillment of her romantic longing, or the personification of her ideal of manhood. In fact the longing for a man had never troubled her, and her ideal was to become a good physician. All that was purely womanly in her nature found satisfaction in the knowledge that she could make someone happy, and so she remained unshaken in her fidelity to the only lover for whom she had time in her ardent studies.

The wedding was to take place on the twenty-sixth of October, at eleven o'clock in the morning. The intimate friends who were to witness the ceremony as assistants to both parties arrived on the twenty-fifth. Arnulf Rau and his wife,

who had been spending several weeks in Switzerland, took rooms in one of the more aristocratic hotels, and invited the beautiful bride to pass the evening with them. Miss Echdeler, president of the Association for the Evolution of the Feminine Psyche, arrived on the same day from Karlsruhe, where a convention of noted leaders of the Woman Movement had just taken place. Mrs. Stummer and her inseparable friend, Miss Wiesbeck, were in Zürich, studying at the University. The bridegroom himself did not arrive until evening, accompanied by Miss Hildegard Haider who had left her sister in charge of the office for several days, and by an old college chum, Referendar Kuno Kulicke. For two terms Josef Reithmeyer had been a member of the corps, and had been the Fuchs of said Kuno Kulicke. The latter had twice flunked his Assessor examination, but his unchanged fidelity was the proof of so much beauty of heart that his esthetic younger friend forgave, for its sake, his otherwise manifold physical, moral, and mental defects.

The three took quarters in a hotel which was characterized more by moderate prices than by elegance or pomp. It was a most sympathetic touch on the part of Dr. Reithmeyer that he

would not appear on the scene of the ceremony until the last moment. His delicacy revolted against what might seem like a forcing himself on his beloved before the wedding, for in her position as bride she seemed to him to have a new right to his protection. He made a formal call the evening of his arrival in all the glory of black frock coat, high hat and clean collar, and not finding her at home, left his card in the most conventional manner.

There was to be a simple wedding dinner at one o'clock in a restaurant where, in the earlier days of his sojourn in Zürich, Dr. Reithmeyer had a flirtation with a waitress. The esthetic under-current in the character of this excellent young scholar would have been offended by the choice of a house with which he had not the least psychic relation.

The morning of the twenty-sixth dawned wet, cold, and disagreeable. The wind that drove the rain in wet masses across the lake seemed to have first thoroughly cooled itself off on the Alpine ice-fields. Shortly after ten o'clock the bridegroom, with his assistants, Box and Kuno, started out under their umbrellas to fetch the fair bride. The men hid their patent leather shoes in rubbers, and had their trousers turned up, while Box

pinned up her velvet skirt to the limit allowed by decency. The three were greatly astonished to find the bride not at home.

"Where can she be?" cried Box, in moral indignation. "A bride needs at least an hour for her toilette, and especially anyone as slow as Claire is."

"Holy Cross, our young lady's getting married?" cried the fat little landlady, opening her eyes wide in astonishment.

"Yes, and the ceremony is set for eleven; didn't she say anything to you about it?" asked Dr. Reithmeyer nervously.

"Not a living word. She's off to the hospital, just like every other day; she didn't say nothing of a wedding. Nay, nay, but she's a queer piece!"

The bridegroom stared helplessly at Box, and Box stared equally helplessly at Mr. Kuno Kulicke, while the Herr Referendar himself sought a support for his fixed and serious gaze on the little landlady's enormous bosom. The three stood there in the corridor feeling that they had been deceived and betrayed, while three dreary rivulets from their umbrellas sadly sought a level. Then the bell rang and Miss Echdeler, Mrs. Stummer and Miss Wiesbeck appeared. These

ladies were equally astonished that the bride was not in her room an hour before the wedding, although they knew that Claire de Fries would not be likely to consider the ceremony for the legalizing of her love as anything particularly solemn or sentimental. Miss Wiesbeck offered to take a cab at the bridegroom's expense, and drive to the Pathological Institute, or, if the bride were not there, to the University Clinic. It was arranged that she should bring the bride to her rooms as soon as she found her, hurry her dressing, and then join the others at the restaurant where the dinner was to be, as it was near the Registrar's office. When she had started, the rest of the little company made their way on foot to the restaurant and sat down in the public room.

"Unsympathetic place," said Miss Echdeler, shivering. And she was quite right. The high bare room, painted in orange-yellow, was full of stale odors of tobacco smoke, food and drink, as the heavy rain had apparently made the morning airing impossible. The walls were greasy, and a moist precipitation of dust and smoke had drawn a thick network of dirty furrows over them. The rain still ran gray off the high window panes, although it had been working at the crust of dirt for hours. Two large excruciatingly indifferent

oil paintings and several high mirrors were as little able to arouse an impression of elegant comfort as were the red plush sofas scattered here and there.

They ordered beer and a trifle to eat, and when the girl brought the drinks, Dr. Reithmeyer asked what had become of Lisel. The unsympathetic waitress didn't know, the lady at the bar hadn't the faintest idea either, anyway the present proprietor had been there only a year — all of which tore the slight psychic bonds to pieces that had drawn Dr. Reithmeyer to this house. He could read in the faces of his friends that they did not approve of his choice, so he felt called upon to offer some explanation.

"Yes, I must say it does not look attractive here to-day," he turned to Miss Echdeler. "But what could I do? I used to flirt with a waitress here, Lisel was her name; then I met Claire and began to write poems. So I had little chance of gaining a more intimate knowledge of restaurant life in Zürich."

Smiles that were more or less dreary, and slow nodding, was all the answer he received. Then Kuno Kulicke felt it devolving upon him to ward off utter boredom, and offered Hildegard "a half." But Box possessed so little understand-

ing of this honor that she did not even say "Prosit," although Mr. Kulicke carried out his part of the ceremony with the utmost politeness. And when Dr. Reithmeyer mildly suggested that this student foolishness was out of place in the presence of ladies, he received a sharp order to "get into his glass."

"One is one, two is two, three is—" Dr. Reithmeyer responded to please him, and drank until he was allowed to stop, then wiped his beard and murmured an audible: "Such childishness."

"Ladies and gentlemen, did you hear that? My 'Fuchs' said 'Childishness.' Childishness is Touche, it is worse even than 'Foolishness.' Seppl-Fuchs, when will you be ready?"

Dr. Reithmeyer laughed, and Box tried to calm the offended Referendar by explaining that anything connected with children would naturally be in the thoughts of a bridegroom on his wedding day.

A little pause followed this witty remark, which was broken by Mrs. Stummer with the declaration: "Ladies and gentlemen, if you continue to bore each other in this fashion, I see myself compelled to journey to the nearest pastry shop to drink a cup of chocolate."

The bridegroom grumbled: "It seems to be

the general desire to spoil my appetite as well as your own. It is certainly unpardonably inconsiderate of Claire to leave us in the lurch like this. She is probably reveling in a post-mortem on her wedding day, while we are eating sausages here. I wish I had remained true to Lisel, then I might have been divorced already. Whereas now there doesn't seem to be much prospect of my getting married at all."

Miss Echdeler and Mrs. Stummer laughed softly, and Kuno Kulicke endeavored to continue his student fun by starting a song, but no one joined him and he finally gave it up in despair. Scarcely five minutes passed during which some one of them did not look at the clock. It was now ten minutes before eleven, the rain had ceased, the sun broke the thick mass of clouds and a few rays fell through the clean washed windows on the waiting wedding party in the orange-yellow room. This glorious moment would have been most auspicious for the holy ceremony, but the bride was still absent. The bridegroom's little touch of humor had vanished again, and a nervous impatience seized him. He ran out into the rain, bareheaded, in his patent leather shoes. Carriage after carriage passed, but not one halted in front of the restaurant.

Then he went in again and asked for the "Journal Amusant." The others followed his example and buried themselves in newspapers and magazines out of respect for his sorrow. No one said a word. Kuno Kulicke wreathed himself in smoke and ordered a third glass of beer. The leaves of the papers rattled now and then as they were turned, and the girl washing cups at the sideboard clattered with her dishes, otherwise it was as painfully quiet as in the waiting room of a physician.

At a quarter past eleven Dr. Reithmeyer threw down his "Journal Amusant" with an angry gesture, and growled between clenched teeth: "If she doesn't want me, very well, then it's all over between us. I do not care to be made a fool of in this way."

Kuno Kulicke threw down his "Wiener Floh" with equal vehemence and said: "This is really too much! The young lady is an academic citizeness, but she doesn't seem to know the first rule of Comment!"

At this moment the door opened and Miss Wiesbeck rushed in breathlessly. The entire company sprang up to meet her.

"Is she there?" they all cried at once.

"Yes," Miss Wiesbeck panted, "she's out there in the cab."

"Dressed?" asked Box.

"No, just as she was. But it's all right, she looks real nice, and she says she put on clean linen to-day, anyway. There was an operation in the Women's Clinic which she couldn't possibly miss, it was so interesting. But hurry up now or the Registrar will be gone."

The little lunch was already paid for, so no time was lost in starting. Dr. Reithmeyer sprang into the cab with his overcoat on his arm and his rubbers in his hand, and sat down beside Claire. Box and the Referendar squeezed themselves onto the narrow front seat, as they were to be the witnesses. The three ladies walked on behind, as there was no other cab to be seen.

Box and Claire greeted each other cordially, and Dr. Reithmeyer introduced his friend Kulicke. He would not look at her himself, and did not even offer her his hand.

"Well, aren't you going to say good morning?" began Claire when they had rattled on in silence for about two minutes. She leaned over to him and pushed her arm through his. "I know it was horrid of me to keep you waiting so, but you mustn't begin by grumbling at me on our wedding day. You must not forget that I have only six months more before my examinations. The

operating course is of the very highest importance for me just now. One can get married any day, but an ovariotomy for a seven-pound multilocular myxo-cystoma ovarii dextri, with a uterus bicornis, and pregnancy of the left horn, is something that doesn't happen quite so often. It was delicious to see the elegance with which our Professor worked — simply superb! I had to supervise giving the anesthetic, so I couldn't leave until the patient had come to again. She will probably die, but the operation was a magnificent success. You ought to see our Professor cut open an abdomen, and lay the intestines to one side, as neatly as a sausage maker arranging his wares; it's simply great!"

"Oh, stop, you'll make me ill!" cried the bridegroom, wringing his hands in despair. "I don't believe you have given one single thought to the importance of this day."

"To be honest, I haven't," she answered calmly. "One cannot allow oneself any distraction before an operation of that kind."

The cab rattled horribly over the stones and Dr. Reithmeyer screamed to his friend Kuno, as he slapped him on the knee: "Did you hear that, Kuno? She calls marriage a distraction!"

The Referendar made a face like a frog that

had just seen a crocodile for the first time. He had assisted at the weddings of two sisters and several cousins, but he had never met anything like this before. And yet this bride, who reveled in the memory of a bloody butchery with the delight of a Spaniard at a bullfight, was a beautiful blond of exquisite figure, made to be loved. Kuno stared at the phenomenon as if hypnotized, while Box was highly amused. Here was a triumph of emancipation, of which she, as fellow woman, was vastly proud. It was time these male creatures were taught they could not have a monopoly of all the higher interests.

The wagon halted. Box sprang out first, and Kuno followed clumsily, opening his umbrella to protect the bride, as it had begun to rain again. The bridegroom got out last, and settled with the driver, while the others fled into the building. Arnulf Rau and his wife had been waiting for nearly an hour in the ante-room, and the cordiality with which a bridal couple are usually greeted in such a place suffered visibly from the nervous excitement caused by the delay. The presiding official had appeared twice in the ante-room, ready to take his departure, and had been persuaded to remain only after much talk. An attendant rushed to announce the party, and the voice of the

Registrar within was heard in an audible national expression of displeasure as he ordered them brought in at once.

The bridal couple, accompanied by their witnesses and the Raus, entered the room without waiting for the other ladies who were not necessary to the ceremony. The Registrar, a small, fat, bald-headed gentleman buttoned into a tight coat, stood ready behind his table, and looked at them angrily through his gold rimmed spectacles. "You don't seem in any hurry to get married," was his ungracious welcome. "May I ask if you have made up your minds at last."

"It was my fault, sir," said Claire de Fries in her sweetest tones, bowing politely. "I had to assist at an operation in the University Clinic, that I couldn't possibly miss. It was an ovariotomy for multilocular myxo-cystoma of the right ovary, and just imagine, we found uterus bicornis with ——"

Dr. Reithmeyer pulled at his bride's sleeve and whispered: "Claire, that really isn't necessary here!"

"Are you the bride?" asked the official, looking at the lady's costume in surprise. She wore a long rubber coat over her gown, and a patent-leather sailor hat on her head.

She answered in the affirmative, and asked for permission to lay off her coat, as it was hot in the room.

"That won't be necessary," grunted the official impatiently. "It's all over in five minutes."

"Must I take off my gloves?" asked Claire.

"Why?"

"I thought — on account of the rings."

"There's no ring here, all we want is your signature, the rest is the pastor's business."

"Oh, we are not going to have a church ceremony!" cried Claire almost indignantly.

The fat little man's patience gave way before the pressure of his hunger and the knowledge that his favorite dish was awaiting him at home. "Get married wherever you like," he cried; "all I want here is a plain 'yes' or 'no.'"

Josef Reithmeyer took his bride's hand and led her to the table. The Registrar hastily read off the papers that confirmed their reception into the honorable company of the Married. And then, without the slightest pathos, he put the important question: "If you really want one another, take each other's right hand and answer with an audible 'yes.'"

Dr. Reithmeyer's yes was given with a touch of emotion, and Claire introduced a humorously

ironical variation into the usual routine, by saying, after a tiny pause, and with a good-natured smile: "Well — yes."

Then the paper was laid before them to be signed, and when the bride had written her full name, Claire Reithmeyer, born de Fries, *cand. med.*, in her stiff proud writing, they were pronounced man and wife. The ladies Echdeler, Stummer, and Wiesbeck rushed in breathlessly during the signing, and were scolded by the official for dirtying the place with their dripping umbrellas. Whereupon the guardian of the holy institution of matrimony disappeared hastily through a second door, and the young couple received the congratulations of their friends. The clerk handed the bridegroom his certificate, and received payment, which completed the sacred act, and then the little company went out again into the pouring rain. Kuno Kulicke brought up three cabs, the Raus and Miss Echdeler got into the first; the young people, *i. e.*, Box, Kuno, the ladies Stummer and Wiesbeck, took the second, and the bridal couple were left to themselves in the third.

When finally alone with his wife, Dr. Reithmeyer laid his arm timidly about her, and pressed her hands gently without a word.

She smiled at him cheerfully and gave him a hearty kiss. "Good morning, dearest," she said merrily. "We had quite forgotten that ceremony. How are we, anyhow? Do you still like me just a little?"

"Oh, you naughty girl," he cried tenderly and pressed her closer. "You really don't deserve that I should."

They were silent again and only the continued gentle pressure of their hands showed they were thinking of each other. When near their goal he broke the dreamy stillness with the whisper: "Tell me Claire, are you happy?"

"Oh, yes," she answered with beaming eyes, "I am to sew up an incision all by myself to-morrow, for the very first time."

"You are incorrigible!" he laughed, half in anger, half in amusement.

She rubbed his beard tenderly. "Dearest Seppl, you must get used to that — science first, then pleasure. You knew my conditions. And now, I'm fearfully hungry!"

The polite Referendar stood ready with an open umbrella when the wagon halted, the others having gone on upstairs to the private room. Now that Mrs. Reithmeyer laid off her ugly rain coat

and sailor hat, she looked very pretty, in spite of the simplicity of her close-fitting dark cloth gown. Mrs. Rau wore a handsome silk dress, but none of the others had taken any particular pains to make themselves beautiful, so that the quietness of the young wife's toilette was not too conspicuous. The correct Referendar was the only one of the gentlemen in a full dress coat, Dr. Reithmeyer wearing a new style long black frock coat, and Arnulf Rau a dinner jacket. The table was neatly and prettily set, without any attempt at pomp, and was served by the head waiter and the unsympathetic girl. The menu consisted of crayfish soup, trout, truffled capon, a pudding, and ice cream. The champagne was served with the pudding and the company had warmed up by that time. Arnulf Rau was expected to make the main speech of the occasion. His wife had already let fall a hint that he was prepared to be called upon. It was, therefore, with no little surprise that the company saw the bridegroom rise and touch his knife to his glass. No one had ever heard him make a speech, and his preliminary embarrassment made them fear a mishap. He asked the servants to withdraw and began timidly, in a voice that quickly grew firmer, to recite the following verses:

I bid you welcome on my marriage day,
And for your friendship thank you from my heart.
You come to a strange feast without display,
A wedding in which music plays no part.
And yet I think, although our ways are free,
We shall not miss a true felicity.

The alienated Church we will restore
To our own home and our own company,
Minus the black-robed stealthy servitor
Of sacred, profitable stupidity.
Too hot this ground for those sly slippered feet.
We fear no hell save what on earth we meet.

My own dear love has had to bear with patience
The poison-tooth of numberless old aunts,
And from the circle of the dear relations
The shamed one was expelled with arrogance.
My mother in the grave turns on her side
To see me take the lost one as my bride.

Before this day we challenged heaven's wrath,
But now a ray of grace has lit on us.
The bourgeois world now ventures on our path,
With tendered palm and smiles magnanimous.
The mangy sheep to her own breast she'll hold,
That they may live henceforth in virtue's fold.

As now I lay my hands all reverently
In thanks and blessing upon this blonde head,—
Long proudly held against hostility,
In smiling grief, by my love comforted,—

And in Love's name pray Sorrow to forbear,
Give all a friendly amen to my prayer.

Be you the priests our union to uphold.
As you are human, you are reverend,
Because your heart-beats ring like bells of gold
In sympathy with stranger or with friend.
He who endures the darts by malice sent
Wins for himself the truest sacrament.

The last two stanzas were uttered in deep emotion, the speaker holding back his tears with difficulty. When he had finished his right hand lay on the beautiful Claire's golden curls. She turned her head under the slight pressure, looked up at him, and they gazed long into each other's eyes. Then the young wife raised her arms to her lover with a graceful unconscious movement, drew him down to her and kissed him on the lips. It was so simple and so natural, and yet it seemed like some sacred ceremony in a holy place. The others rose and touched glasses with the young couple, in the silence of a general emotion.

Then the waiter and the unsympathetic girl entered with the ice cream. Arnulf Rau ate tiny pieces of it with a heavily furrowed brow. Reithmeyer had stolen some of what he was about to say, and he had to make hurried changes in his speech. But when the servants had gone out

again, he rose and touched his glass. They all settled themselves comfortably in their chairs as one does when the curtain rises in a theater, for an interesting speech might be expected from Arnulf Rau. And he spoke:

"Honored and Dear Friends:

"We have just seen a civil ceremony performed in dreary sobriety, and pouring rain helped to wash away any beauty we might have expected from this occasion. But our dear friend Josef Reithmeyer has come to his own aid and to the aid of us all, and has shed the brightness of his verses as a shining wedding torch over this simple festival. And that is just what is remarkable in this informal ceremony, that it receives its beauty and its sacredness from itself alone, without the help of the church that looks so coldly on the fate of the individual, and without asking aid from the customs of society, which set the same pomp and turmoil as a seal on the union of true love, or on the most dastardly money-bargain between man and woman.

"Our friends, Josef Reithmeyer and Claire de Fries, have given themselves the blessing, and they have won a right to do so. They are of the Community of the Free Ones, conscious that they are responsible to themselves alone for what they

do. They have tried themselves before entering into this union and their love has not been found wanting. And if this love is called a marriage only from to-day on, they can rest in the proud assurance that it will prove a true marriage, indissoluble in that their souls will grow ever more together in mutual understanding and in mutual forgiveness. The last seems to me the most important, for we poor mortals have always something to forgive one another in that no two wills can ever take the selfsame road. I will not talk to you of love to-day, my friends; that love is best of which least is said, and there is something else in my heart. I, who have given the expression, 'The Third Sex,' to the world, find in this wedding something of symptomatic importance. In the world of the Dead, of those already dead in her eyes, *i. e.,* her family and all the other dear families in the herd of the Unawakened, our friend Claire is called an emancipated woman. She is looked upon as a woman who has thrown aside all modesty belonging to her sex to fight with man for a livelihood in his own field — nay more, she has also dared to live her own life as she chose it, outside the boundary set by moral law for her sex. And yet, does she belong to the Third Sex? Is she one of those human Things, neither fish,

flesh, nor fowl, whose brain can use its functions only for the winning of a medical diploma? You women, who are proud of what your sister has already achieved in her struggle for the recognition of her own free will, you will say, perhaps, that she is a Super-Woman, who has conquered the weakness of her sex and the longing for man's protection. But I say to you as a man, and every man who knows her will say the same, that she is neither a man-woman nor a thing-woman, but simply a *woman,* undeniably the second sex. Her whole being breathes the charm of the true woman, and it would not be possible for her to go through life without love. She shall be for us the proof that a woman may be all woman and yet be a free human being; that she may be a loving wife to the man of her choice, and yet live her own mental life and fill her own independent place.

"Our friend Josef Reithmeyer will not be offended if I refuse to create a new sex in his honor. I do not even count him among the Super-Men. Seppl dear, you are just an ordinary, every-day man. You have devoted your services to the interest of the state, and to leading growing youth to the springs of knowledge and beauty in our literature. You have always done your duty well

and never aimed at the Boundless. But you have had the courage of your convictions, and that has raised you from the Herd and stamped you as a Free Man. And you have found the strongest and deepest possibilities of your soul in your love. We all know that you are inwardly freer than you appear, and that you have bent to the forms of morality and custom for superficial reasons alone, and because you knew that these forms could not injure your love. The best we can wish for your marriage is that it may be true and good in spite of the fact that it *is* a marriage. And when you are a Professor and begin to grow too tame, then Madame Claire must stir you up to remember your courage. It is said that every true woman is nearer nature than we are, and that she never loses something of her original wildness.

"But what I wish most particularly to say to you on this important day, is that you are chosen to work through example against the growth of that true Third Sex, the existence of which I once made clear to you; against those weakling masculine souls in unattractive female forms, which have set their stupid pride in killing the holy longing within themselves, in mocking at the rights of nature, while babbling of their rights to work at the Tower of Culture. Unhappy souls in Purgatory,

for whom no one prays, that is the Third Sex, created by wrong social conditions and misunderstood talk of emancipation. You two, however, are to show to them that are wandering in Darkness, that it is possible to be a sex being, and yet a free modern mind. Love one another, beget strong boys and girls, nourish them with the food of your wisdom and your experience, and give them your weapons for the fight against stupidity and tradition. The boys' fresh hardihood shall strengthen the maidens' courage, and the girls' gentleness shall soften the brutality of the boys' pride of vigor.

"Then you will bring up a race of Free Ones, which is not ashamed of its double character, and does not make an absurd bone of contention in the precedence of the trousers. Sepp and Claire, beloved friends, I greet you as the ancestors of a new and glorious race! In this sense, hip, hip, hurrah!"

The toast was received with rejoicings, and Arnulf Rau was complimented on his superb oratory. Laughter, jokes, and serious debates on the subject filled the room with merry noise, and this unique wedding dinner ended in a burst of jollity, clinking of glasses, reddened faces, and clouds of tobacco smoke.

In the midst of the wildest noise Kuno Kulicke asked his neighbor Box if this were not the moment to propose a toast to the ladies, and received the startling answer that there were no ladies present, only men and women. He thought that over for a while, and then he suggested that no one had as yet thought of mentioning the revered parents and parents-in-law. His official conscience would not let him rest. But Box foresaw a fiasco for the good Referendar and a possible spoiling of the fun for all the company, if she let him follow the promptings of his demon. So she rose herself, and in a few well-put words toasted the messenger from another world, who had not feared to leave the peace of his well-ordered opinions to assist his friend against the very doubtful company in which he now moved: a glass to the amiable and courageous Herr Referendar Kuno Kulicke!

The fêted one had no time to answer, for a general departure was made in a few moments. The company adjourned to a café and closed the evening with a visit to a better class concert, that the auspicious day might end in harmony.

But even then there was a tiny cloud on the sky of matrimonial bliss for our good Josef Reithmeyer.

All his endeavors to persuade his young wife to take ever so short a wedding journey were fruitless. She promised to visit him during the Christmas vacation and to beautify his bachelor home by her presence there for two whole weeks, but otherwise she was to remain a wife *in absentia* until after her examinations.

So Dr. Reithmeyer set out the next day, without his wife and in the company of Hildegard Haider, who desired to spend her little vacation in seeing something of Switzerland. The Doctor left Zürich, as he felt himself unable to endure longer the pang of the enforced renunciation.

Box tried her best to comfort the disappointed man, and to instill into his brain the proper respect for the tremendous energy shown by his wife.

"I don't want respect, I want love," he muttered grimly.

Box shrugged her shoulders. "The speaker of yesterday was right — you are just an ordinary, every-day man."

CHAPTER IX

ON the first day of November the usually quiet Adelgundenstrasse in Munich witnessed what was almost a small-sized riot. At ten o'clock in the forenoon the shutters had been drawn up from one of the low windows of a ground floor apartment, and a most unusual sight stood revealed to the astonished gaze of the passers-by. One large window-pane and a boxed-in inclosure at the back made a show-case of the simple window, and the exhibit therein was so new and so strange that, as aforesaid, it occasioned almost a riot. And during the day many men, and particularly many women of the better class seemed to have met by appointment in the Adelgundenstrasse, to stand talking eagerly before the window.

The walls of the show-case were covered with handsome materials in graceful folds, feathers and artificial flowers strewn carelessly on the floor gave the appearance of a new sort of carpet, and on the center of this carpet stood a tinted Venus

de Milo about eighteen inches high. Around about the Venus, on little easels, or hanging to the walls by golden cords, was a collection of delicate water colors in exquisite old frames. These pictures all had for subject the same charming young lady, in some cases head and bust only, with fantastic and most becoming hats on her rich ash-blond hair, but mainly in full length, clad in costumes that were tasteful and elegant in the extreme, and original in style. Near the top of the glass window was the name of the new firm in gold letters:

Lilly v. Robiceck,
Modes et Robes.

The apartment behind the show-case comprised four rooms. The narrow corridor, lighted softly by the deep red glow of an old silver church lamp, led first into a large front room, the one back of the show window. Colored shades softened the daylight agreeably, walls and ceiling were covered with flowered cretonne. One large mirror on the wall, a second standing mirror, a large wardrobe with shelves and closets for materials, etc.; one large and several small tables, a sofa and one or two upholstered chairs, made up the furniture of this room. All the pieces were

new and original in form, in the style of the Munich Art Reformers. None of them were noticeable from any unpleasant over-costliness, but all showed aristocratic simplicity and originality in shape, color and material. The coverings of the furniture and the decorations of the room were in pale green and reddish tints. Interesting fashion plates of the last three centuries, a lithograph of Empress Eugénie in the crinoline, and a photograph of the Bavarian Princess Sophie in her wedding dress, hung in white enamel frames to the right and the left of the large mirror. Even the most ordinary objects, the pin trays and the toilet articles, showed the same pleasing artistic pattern, and the order and measure books were enclosed in original and attractive bindings.

A glass door separated this large reception room from Lilly von Robiceck's boudoir. Here were her desk, her little library, her piano, and all the little trifles that held pleasant memories for her, keepsakes from her girlhood days, wedding presents, and many charming gifts from her admirers. Photographs of Franz Xaver Pirngruber, Werner Rudolfi, Joachim von Lossow, Prince Cloppenburg-Usingen, and even one of the almost mythical Mr. von Robiceck, completed the

decoration, and in a dark corner hung her own masterpiece, the copy of the Old German Madonna with the unconquerable nose. The furniture of this little room was part of her wedding outfit, and showed no particular modernity. Back of the corridor were the large light sewing room, the kitchen and appurtenances.

The morning of the first of November saw a most select little gathering in Lilly von Robiceck's apartment, even before the clock had struck ten. Prince Cloppenburg-Usingen, who had given the money for the outfitting of the new firm, was there, and the four young artists who had designed and carried out the entire equipment. The idea of using the charming head of the firm herself as the most attractive advertisement had sprung from the brain of Werner Rudolfi, and most of her costume portraits were from his brush. The remainder were done by Joachim von Lossow, and the two other young men had designed the furniture and supervised the work of the upholsterer and decorator.

The youngest of the gentlemen drew up the shutters promptly on the stroke of ten, while Joachim von Lossow played a festival march composed for the occasion. Lilly and her guests took turns at peeping through a little hole in the

back of the show-case, to enjoy the impression made on the passers-by, and as the crowd grew larger and larger Lilly clapped her hands in delight, seized the worthy Prince and whirled him around the room.

She wore the reception costume which she had designed for this solemn occasion, a long loose skirt of fine mouse-gray cloth, with a little open jacket of the same trimmed with braid, over a loose blouse of flowered silk held together by a dark red velvet belt. Lilly's other gowns and hats, in which Rudolfi had immortalized her in his pictures, were arranged on forms, or laid carelessly on the sofa and chairs in the reception room. No one appeared for an hour after the opening, and the two sewing girls, in fluted caps and immense white aprons, waited with impatience for the ring of the door bell which should announce a customer. The bell did ring at eleven o'clock, but it was the boy from Dallmeyer's delicatessen store, with some cold dishes the Prince had ordered. Messengers from the wine merchant and the florist followed, and in a few moments a dainty little table was set up in Lilly's boudoir, covered with the most alluring cold lunch dishes and any number of drinks. The gentlemen fell to, and showed an appetite worthy the festal

occasion, glasses touched and toasts were drunk in honor of the charming owner of the establishment, with all good wishes for her success.

Little Mrs. von Robiceck was naturally considerably excited. She listened with one ear only to the praise and compliments of her good friends, while the other was cocked for the first sound of the bell. But the longed-for signal was not heard until a quarter before twelve, and then one of the girls came in to whisper that a gentleman was in the reception room, and wished to speak to Mrs. von Robiceck.

The jolly company was struck dumb in respectful silence, and Lilly glided through the door into the reception room. There stood Franz Xaver Pirngruber! He waited until the girl had closed the door behind her, and then he ran toward Lilly with wide open arms. She turned in alarm toward the glass door, knowing that her guests were seeking transparent spots in the pattern on the panes through which they could watch her reception of her first caller, and with an energetic gesture warned her old admirer to restrain his ardor.

"Lilly, you sweet, naughty Lilly!" whispered Franz Xaver excitedly, scarcely able to control

his longing to seize her in his arms. "Why haven't you let me hear from you all this long time? It was only through the circular my wife received yesterday that I knew you were here and had followed my advice. Oh, Lilly, I love you just as much as ever. Don't you care for me at all now?"

"My dear sir," answered Mrs. von Robiceck with droll dignity, "I have opened this establishment to clothe the ladies of Munich, and not to receive declarations of love from their husbands therein. Kindly remember that fact. But otherwise I am very glad to see you again — on condition that no mention shall ever be made of our past relations. That is all over and done with now. I have divorced myself not only from my husband but from my entire past."

Franz Xaver Pirngruber drew a long face and stammered in conflicting emotions: "Indeed? — is that so? well — well, then I congratulate you — and — oh, yes, I wanted to give you a little something for your opening day, so I persuaded my wife to come here — it would please me very much if she were the first to wear a costume made by you."

Lilly clapped her hands in delight, blushing charmingly, and exclaimed: "Really? Oh,

Xaverl, that was awfully nice — you are a dear fellow after all! When will she be here?"

"Any minute; I ran on ahead to prepare you. I had better be off now, or I might meet her, which would be embarrassing."

"No, no, that won't do!" cried Lilly hastily. "Stay here a while; I'll hide you with the others." She took his hand and ushered him into the next room.

The master of the humoristic brush was not a little astonished to find a company here in secret convivial enjoyment. Lilly introduced him to the gentlemen as an old friend and served him herself to the lobster salad and champagne, describing enthusiastically the while what the others had done for her.

"Well, well, well, and you didn't say a word to me about it," complained Franz Xaver. "As father of the idea, I should have been the first to know of it."

"And as a married man, the very last," smiled Lilly. "I never compromise my good friends."

The bell rang again and a few seconds later the maid came in and beamingly announced a stylish lady. Lilly rose from the table, took a deep breath, and entered her reception room with dignified mien, while the gentlemen crept silently

to the glass door, seeking holes to peep through.

This first customer was in truth the handsome Mrs. Pirngruber. She was honestly delighted with the samples of her talent that Lilly showed her in the shape of her own clothes, and a long serious consultation followed, Mrs. Pirngruber sitting on the sofa, and Lilly on a chair in front of her.

The watchers in the boudoir began to find this tiresome, and drew back to the table, eating and drinking in whispered conversation. Mr. Pirngruber alone remained at his post, and could not seem to look his fill at the two women, the one so stately, the other so dainty. Each seemed to set off the other, each to give the other just the foil she needed, and Franz Xaver loved them both, he hardly knew which he loved the more, and he saw no end to his capacity for loving. He felt that he was a happy man, a man truly to be envied. After which he returned to his lobster salad.

The consultation of the two ladies lasted a full half hour, and when Lilly finally returned to her friends, she sparkled with happiness. She laid her arm across Franz Xaver's shoulder and cried in a voice of suppressed jubilation: "Oh, you dear, dear friend! what a charming wife you

have! Just think, she told me she thought I was lovely! And such a pretty gown as we have thought out, sweet enough to eat! She says it can cost three hundred marks."

"Heavens above, I see my finish!" groaned the happy husband, falling into his chair. "She told me she wouldn't spend more than a hundred and fifty."

Prince Cloppenburg held out his champagne glass to the crushed one, and said merrily: "Come, revered master, join us in a glass to the health of our *dear* friend, Lilly."

Lilly von Robiceck straightened up suddenly at the sound of the glasses, as if struck by an inspiration, and sent her voice out into the jovial noise:

"Be quiet, friends, I want to make a speech."

"I herewith solemnly declare you men to be a delightful sort, except when you are in love. No sensible and self-respecting human being can consort with women for any length of time, for they are death to common-sense and self-respect. Everything bad that has ever come to me in life has come to me through women, and simply and solely because more of your sort run after me than after the others. Just recently the leading representatives of Munich's progressive women, the

heads of that celebrated association with the name I never can remember, declared me to be unworthy to join in their good work. In spite of the fact that I had the most impressive recommendations from the influential Mr. Arnulf Rau, these ladies declared me to be an outcast. And why? Again, simply because more of your sort run after me than they do after any lady of the unpronounceable association. Gentlemen, I have cursed my sex and my face as long as I wandered in the paths set apart for femininity, helpless prey to all the wild beasts that range the so-called rose garden of Love. But now I have found the way out, and have discovered a neutral zone, where I need no longer be merely a woman, and where I can yet utilize my true womanly talents to advantage. I will take my revenge on my fellow-women by making money on their vanity. And, gentlemen, in this happy zone love is not known, please remember that. I put the sum of my experience thus far in the following assertion: 'You men are devils when in love, but you are angels in your friendship for a woman.' As my friends, you have shown me the way to my salvation through work; you, my dear Franz Xaver; you, best of Princes; you, my darling Werner,

and my good Joachim, I thank you with all my heart. Long life to my dear good angels!"

The dear good angels were much delighted at the praise awarded them from such pretty lips, and at the close of the speech they each received an unasked-for kiss from those same pretty lips, as advance payment for their assistance with advice and with labor. Thus ended the memorable breakfast.

Lilly von Robiceck had sent out five hundred circulars to the prominent women of the royal residence city, Munich, but only three of them visited her establishment. Quite different, however, was the impression made by the new costume worn by Mrs. Pirngruber at a gathering in the Hanfstängel house. Several ladies appeared in the rooms in the Adelgundenstrasse the very next morning, and when finally an order came from the still handsome and extremely elegant wife of a rich brewer, Lilly von Robiceck's fortune was made. During the Carnival season she had so much to do that she kept ten girls and two forewomen busy, and at the close of the season she had an order from a Princess of the Royal house. Before the month of January was out she paid back to Prince Cloppenburg a good por-

tion of the money he had lent her, and it was the very first return from any of his many loans.

Her faithful friends were heartily glad of her great success, but they were not particularly happy over it, for sweet little Lilly hadn't a moment for them now. The one or the other would drop in during the day occasionally, for five minutes' chat in the quiet boudoir between her sessions with her aristocratic customers. But it was no particular pleasure to sit for two hours reading illustrated papers, as if in the waiting-room of a celebrated physician, just for a pressure of the hand, and a few friendly words. They came less and less frequently, and at last only when especially invited for an evening. The younger of them were particularly grieved because Lilly could not be persuaded to join in the festivities of the winter season. The year before she had been the life of all the public balls she had visited, but this season she would not attend one. It was true that just at that time the pressure of work was tremendous, but every Saturday was followed by a Sunday, when she might have allowed herself a little pleasure.

If the good gentlemen, who were as naïve and as unsuspecting as are all respectable men, had

listened with a little more attention to the gossip of their womenkind, they would have discovered another reason for the refusal of the charming gown-composer to attend the balls. And also the reason for her sudden predilection for loose hanging blouses and very wide pleated skirts in her own costumes.

Franz Xaver Pirngruber heard the news from his wife, and he turned pale at the hearing, so deeply did he suffer with his unhappy friend. He took heart one evening and called on her after business hours. She had just sent off her forewoman, and was at her simple supper when he arrived. She received him cordially, and chatted as merrily and easily as in the first Maytime of their love. But sweet as she was, the good Franz Xaver couldn't seem to catch her mood, for he had a momentous question on the tip of his tongue, which he couldn't get any further. Toward ten o'clock she asked him to go, as it was her bedtime, and she yawned heartily to corroborate her statement.

"Aren't you well, Lilly dear," he asked, "that you go to bed so early?"

"Oh, yes, I am very well," she answered, "but I am very tired this evening. I get up early in the morning so as to have an hour for

myself then — it is the only time of day when I can sit down with a book."

"Hm! Well, good night, Lilly dear." He took her hand and held it, looking attentively at her.

"Why do you look at me so, Xaverl?"

"I was thinking your hard work seems to agree with you — you are growing stouter, I think," he said blushing like a young girl. "Or does it only seem so because you wear such wide loose things now?"

She smiled up into his eyes and shook her finger at him. "Confess, my dear,— you don't dare say it out,— the ladies have been gossiping about me?"

"Is it true, Lilly?" he whispered, timidly.

She nodded with a sudden blush.

He sighed a comically deep sigh, then looked helplessly at her and, with a question in his eyes, laid his forefinger on his own breast.

She shook her head smiling.

"No?" he cried, and sighed another deep, deep sigh.

She seated herself on his lap, something she had not done since their parting in the summer, looked down at her finger tips for some time, and then said, with a deep blush: "You mustn't ask

me anything about it, Xaverl. It is *my* child, mine alone, and no one else has anything to do with it."

"Why, Lilly!" he cried aloud, and nearly let her fall from his lap in his shock. She stood up, shrugged her shoulders, turned from him, and threw a glance of sweet innocence up at the Madonna with the unconquerable nose.

They were both silent for some time. The master of the humoristic brush rubbed his brow meditatively and she awaited his judgment. Finally Franz Xaver found his tongue.

"You know, little woman, I'm not reproaching you, that would be too stupid, but this affair looks devilish like —— Oh, dear! oh, dear! The poor innocent *must* have a father."

"Why?" asked Lilly simply. "I can take care of it myself perfectly well."

"But what are you going to do with it? you can't have it here?"

"Indeed, I intend to have it here with me."

"But Lilly, think of your name, your business!"

"I don't care. If the ladies here don't want to get their clothes in an establishment where there is a child, then I'll pack up and go to Berlin or Vienna. I can find a place anywhere. I

don't intend to leave the poor little thing to the care of some indifferent stranger. Oh, no, you don't know me, any of you! My child stays here with me, and I will be a good mother to it, even if it should ruin me to do so."

He rose and took both her hands. "Lilly dear," he said in emotion, "you are a brave little woman, and I respect you for it. If the fight proves too hard for you, count on me for assistance. Whether the child is mine or not, I'll stand by you. God bless you, dear heart."

He kissed her hands, and hastened away that she might not see his eyes were moist with tears.

CHAPTER X

LILLY VON ROBICECK disappeared from Munich about the end of April, and everyone knew why. She returned again in July, and presented a dear little girl as her daughter to her forewoman and her five sewing girls — the other half of the force had been dismissed before her departure. The forewoman gave notice at once, for she was a strictly moral person, and the five sewing girls divided themselves into two camps, the one for, the other against, their mistress. The party in sympathy with her consisted of four of them, each of whom already had a child of her own, the fifth was alone in the opposition. But she stayed on, as she felt flattered at being the only white lily in this pool of iniquity.

Lilly had been obliged to leave the Church to gain her divorce, so she did not have her child christened. But soon after her return she gathered her more intimate friends at a private festival in which Lilly the II. (she had named the child after herself, so as not to compromise any-

one) was made welcome in the community of the New and the Free, who do not stand on the Other Side of Good and Bad, but who desire to stand on the Other Side from all loveless prejudice.

The ladies who came to order their summer clothes could sometimes hear the hearty little voice of the new Lilly in the neighboring room, and those who asked received the startling answer: "Yes, Madame, that is my baby. Please excuse me a moment, I nurse it myself."

And when the customer exclaimed in astonishment: "But you have been divorced for so long?" Lilly would reply with a smile: "Oh, yes, that is not Mr. von Robiceck's child, thank God! I do not see why a woman who is perfectly independent, as I am, should not have a child for herself alone, about which no one else has a word to say."

Some ladies, after this exciting revelation, decided to have their gowns made elsewhere. But there were others who now came of themselves to the celebrated establishment managed by Lilly von Robiceck. The entire executive board of the Association for the Evolution of the Feminine Psyche appeared, and threw itself upon the imagination of the talented gown-composer for the

making of new coverings for the New Woman. Now that Lilly von Robiceck had a child, she was a heroine in the eyes of those very same ladies who once refused her admission to their association, and her child was to them a symbol, it was the New Child. Lilly received glowing letters from excited young ladies who were about to throw off all conventional fetters, and even gray-haired priestesses of the new Religion for the Emancipation of Women, such as Baroness Grotzinger, offered her their friendship. The costumes ordered by these new friends were not so expensive, but they could be more striking and original, and served well as advertisement. The dull season brought slight business, but with the coming of autumn most of the renegade customers had given up the attempt to balance themselves timidly on their moral principles. They decided it was better to stand firmly on the ground of the fact that nowhere else were such good clothes to be had as in the nursery in the Adelgundenstrasse, and so they all appeared again, even the two forewomen.

The business prospered, the baby prospered and so did the new friendships. Yes, it was to be only *friendship* for all time now. Werner Rudolfi had made another attempt to induce Lilly

to marry him, as for her sake he would like to have had her little daughter christened Lilly Rudolfi. But she refused gently and firmly. So the good young artist packed his toothbrush and night shirt in a satchel, and set out for a little consolation trip in company with Franz Xaver Pirngruber. These two had felt strangely drawn to one another lately.

Hildegard Haider was one of the new friends of the mother of the "New Child," and the two grew to like each other more and more, the better they became acquainted. Many eager debates they held, in the little boudoir back of the reception room, on the questions that excite the minds of the more intelligent women of our time.

And Box spoke one evening: "Do you know, it is all these horrid men-women, who dabble amateurishly in art and science, and talk so much about their equality, who ruin the business for true progress. They are not women at all, but merely abnormal beings such as every generation has seen. But there are plenty of women who do not need man, and yet are swayed by the truest feminine impulse — I mean, of course, by maternal love. Now true progress seems to me to mean a state wherein *these* women will not be forced to give up all independence and joy of life.

In former days they had to crawl in anywhere in the family and eat the bread of charity as maiden aunts. They were allowed to make themselves useful, and all the unpleasant tasks were forced upon them which have always been the portion of our supposed patience. They were permitted to train stupid, malicious children, spoiled entirely by the imbecility of their parents; they were made to care for unendurable old men and women; and to play watchdog when the family was off enjoying itself. Our Arnulf Rau has found the right word here, what we want is the *Revolt of the Aunts*. Just think of the power they would be, if the enormous army of the Aunts could work its way through to independence. We must put out of the world, not only this silly contempt for the older unmarried woman, but also the moral indignation shown toward the unmarried mother. It is possible that with the other weeds the sacred institution of matrimony may also be plucked up and cast into the fire. But I can't say I think that would be such a misfortune. Marriage is an unnatural state of affairs for man, and for woman it is a happiness only in the rarest cases. Whence come the hypocrisy, the lying, and the petty malice, the envy and the malicious joy in the destruction of things one holds dear, all

these qualities that disgust us so in present-day femininity — whence do they come, except from the necessity of the dependent woman to find a *modus vivendi* with the men to whom they must look for support! I am convinced that there are just as few women who can feel respect and confidence in their husbands during the whole term of their marriage, as there are men who can be eternally faithful to their wives. The man becomes brutal, the woman vulgar. Marriage destroys the character, for it demands too much politics. When two free human beings really belong together, they will be glad to stay together, so that in a state where there is no compulsory marriage, there could be *only* happy marriages. Of course the mother must be allowed all rights to her children, and be able to support them herself; and the men must be compelled by law to care for those of their wives and children who of their own free will have given up their independence."

"But the family?" Lilly put in thoughtfully.

"The family can only gain by it," replied Miss Haider confidently. "There would be families consisting of *mother* and children, and some consisting of *father* and children only; and in these families the children would be spared the demor-

alizing example of a constant conflict between parents who no longer love and respect each other. Whereas in the families with mother *and* father, *eo ipso,* happiness and peace would reign supreme. But otherwise I can look on the change only as a benefit, for the influence of the family leads to tyranny of the finer, more delicate natures, and is an obstacle to the welfare of the whole of humanity. I expect a most beneficial freshening of the race from the break-up of the old-fashioned marriage and family ties, a physical and mental improvement to mankind, because then more children will be born of true love, and they will have more intelligent mothers."

"I know another advantage," cried Lilly, with a sly smile. "The ugly women could no longer be so haughty and disagreeable, because mere virtue of itself would have no value."

"Quite right," agreed Box. "Arnulf Rau has spoken of that, too. He says the *overrating of virginity* is the means by which men hold women most surely in their power. It is a brutal overpowering through stupid vanity. But we refuse to bow to it any longer. In my opinion a girl who stands up bravely and acknowledges her child in the face of the prejudices of our imbecile society, and gains universal respect through her

personality and her work, this girl, I say, does more for humanity and progress than the woman who achieves a professorship of astronomy, for instance."

"Thank you," said Lilly, blushing with pleasure.

The ladies were silent a few moments and then Hildegard Haider spoke again:

"It is strange how many interesting female types our own little circle can show. There is Katia Rau, the wife who lives in fear and trembling, and has become past mistress in the art of clever hypocrisy; there is Claire Reithmeyer, the woman with the strong gift for science, but with strong sensuality as well, who needs love to keep her mental balance; and then the strong intelligences without sensuality, Babette Girel, who is a true man, and Meta Echdeler, who is a true lady. Then there is my poor dear sister, the 'sweet flower,' still of the old-fashioned type, who makes alluring eyes and sends out her nets without success, because the men she would like prefer the New Woman, and she herself doesn't care for those who still like the old style. Yes, yes, that is a very modern conflict. And then, there is you, and here am I, and they all think me one of the Third Sex because I stand as firm

as any man on my own feet, and allow no one to draw the wool over my eyes. To be frank, I am sorry for that — I would love to have a child of my own. I will confide in you that I once made a timid attempt at it, but the object in question was unworthy, he skipped with three hundred marks of my money. Tell me, dear friend, how did you come by your sweet little daughter?" Charming little Mrs. von Robiceck smiled delicately: "That is a business secret."

. . . . . .

The thoughts to which Hildegard Haider gave expression in the conferences in the cosy little back room in the Adelgundenstrasse were in the main the mental property of the great Arnulf Rau, and he had decided to use the interesting material for a novel which should bear the title, "The Third Sex."

But, as one is never quite sure whether Arnulf Rau will really carry out his world-upheaving plans or not, and as in my opinion the world should never be spared a wholesome upheaval, I have taken the liberty of forestalling him. I crave your forgiveness.

THE END

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